Just another flag?

THE SOCIAL OUTLOOK OF IRISH REPUBLICANISM, 1916-1940

TADGH QUILL-MANLEY /
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FIRST PUBLISHED 2026
ISBN: 2370002187169
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INTRODUCTION

"If it is Communism to undo the Conquest… to destroy landlordism in its many forms and restore their heritage to the dispossessed: to enable those who produce wealth to obtain the fullest advantage of that wealth… to end robbery and exploitation by a privileged minority: then Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, Lalor, Connolly, Pearse and Mellows were Communists, and the Irish Republican Army is a Communist organisation."

***Maurice 'Moss' Twomey, IRA Chief-of-Staff*[1]**

"I am prepared to go the whole hog for the Workers' Republic."

***Sean MacBride BL, IRA Chief-of-Staff*[2]**

"What are we fighting for? Is it just to put up another flag?"

Herbert 'Sean' Mitchell, O.C. of the Cork No.1 Brigade and Army Executive member

"My idea is the Workers' Republic for which Connolly died."

***Constance Markiewicz, first female MP, IRA and Cumann na mBán figurehead, and revolutionary TD*[3]**

"The oneness of the struggle against national subjection and social oppression in a subject nation has been stressed by James Connolly."

***George Gilmore, Army Executive member*[4]**

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[1] *'Moss Twomey, Radicalism, and the IRA, 1931-33: A Reassessment.' 'Saothar' Vol. 26 (2001), pp. 53-60. Professor Brian Hanley.*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Mac Donncha, M (2022). 'Dáil Éireann Divides on the Treaty. Remembering the Past - Centenary of Crucial Vote.' An Phoblacht.*

[4] *English, R. (2023). The IRA and the Partition of Ireland. Review of Irish Studies in Europe. [online] doi:https://doi.org/10.32803/rise.v6i2.3214.*

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"The capitalist has no country. Well, our comment is, the patriot has a country, and when he wakens to the new danger, he may spoil the capitalist dream."

Terence MacSwiney MP/TD, Lord Mayor of Cork, O.C. of the Cork No.1 Brigade

"The Irish Republic stands therefore for the ownership of Ireland by the people of Ireland. It means that the means and processes of production must not be used for the profit or aggrandisement of any group or class."

Liam Mellows TD, Army Executive member

"I will continue to insist: a truly free Republic must also be a Workers' Republic, yes - but that concept of 'worker' must include all who contribute meaningfully to the life and progress of the nation."

Mary MacSwiney TD (sister of Terence)

"He who attacks the workers attacks the Republic - and Republicans know their duty in regard to such disputes."

Editor, 'An Phoblacht,' 18 October 1930

"The possessing class is the natural enemy of revolution, and Irish liberty can come only by revolution."

Commentary in 'Sinn Féin,' 22 September 1923

"The slum question will remain untouched because the Free State cannot face the difficulties which consist of their own reactionary supporters, whose interests, banking and otherwise, would be injured by any radical attempt to command the credit required to build the houses."

Commentary in 'Sinn Féin,' 20 December 1924

"Terence MacSwiney's was the first Republican funeral that ever passed through the very centre of world imperialism and world capitalism."

Commentary in 'The Watchword & Voice of Labour,' 6 November 1920

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"*We believe the re-organisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people."*

IRA Manifesto, January 1933

"My instinct is with the landless man against the lord of lands, and with the bread-less man against the master of millions."

Pádraig Pearse, Barrister and 1916 Easter Rising leader

"By taking its stand upon the principles enunciated in that Proclamation, the IRA had accepted responsibility for the task of putting an end to the present system of exploitation carried on in the interests of Bankers, Ranchers and Industrial Capitalists."

'The Only Army that Ireland Needs,' - a feature in 'An Phoblacht,' 29 October 1932

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

This meticulously researched text, '*Just Another Flag? The Social Agenda of Irish Republicanism, 1916-1940*' describes an often overlooked part of the Irish Republican (primarily the IRA and its affiliates) agenda, which sometimes creates a strong cognitive dissonance with the common interpretation we have come to accept, as oft recalled in popular memory.

Irish Republicanism, unlike its American counterpart, has always possessed a radical social streak. For example, during the Fenian uprising of 1867, a proclamation was published in the '*London Times*' by the same Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) later referred to in 1916. Written "on behalf of ***proletarian*** Ireland" it was even more explicit than its successor of Easter 1916:

> *"We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of Monarchical Government, we aim at founding a Republic based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour.*
>
> *The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare, also, in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and complete separation of Church and State…*
>
> *Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour."*

As pointed out in a 2020 article by the '*Tribune*' magazine, it was, for the Ireland of its day, amazingly both secular and republican. The 1867 proclamation was also class conscious: it had agitated against the property rights of an economic oligarchy; contrasting "aristocratic leeches" with the other classes, the "real owners of the soil"; and also referred to the

"oppression" of the working-class and promising the people of Ireland the "intrinsic value of their labour." Even more explicit, for a proclamation of national liberation, was its internationalism. Much of this could be explained by the context of its progenitor, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, colloquially referred to as the Fenians. Its founder was the iconic James Stephens, an individual immersed in European revolutionary politics. Stephens had documented contact with European revolutionary circles associated with the Karl Marx-founded International Workingmen's Association. The Ireland he sought to liberate was still devastated by the effects of the Great Famine, less than two decades prior. Most of the population had remained disenfranchised - even after the 1850 Reform Act extended the vote to men with property valued over £12. While this reform enfranchised about a third of English men, in Ireland fewer than one in six qualified. Consequently, the Fenian movement drew predominantly from the working and 'lower' classes, including artisans and urban labourers. As Karl Marx observed, Fenianism was:

> "*characterised by a socialistic tendency and by being a lower orders movement… the movement took root (and is still really rooted) only in the mass of the people*."

Indeed, it has apparently been airbrushed that the Fenians had the support of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (co-authors of the '*Communist Manifesto*'). The 1867 proclamation had been influenced by Stephens, and most likely aided by Thomas J. Kelly, who had served as a Union Colonel in the American Civil War which occurred a couple of years beforehand.[5] A research feature by the University of Delaware also points out that the Fenian proclamation of 1867 was "heavily influenced by Karl Marx and socialism."[6]

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[5] *Burtenshaw & Fallon (2020). 'Ireland's Other Proclamation.' Tribune.*

[6] *'A Terrible Beauty is Born: The Easter Rising at 100'. Online Exhibitions - University of Delaware (2016).* https://exhibitions.lib.udel.edu/easter1916/home/ireland-to-1900/rebellions/

Furthermore, the land reform activist James Fintan Lalor, referred to by the well-known Fenian, John Devoy, as "the real father of Fenianism," opined that "the absolute (allodial) ownership of the lands of Ireland is vested of right in the people of Ireland." In '*Labour in Irish History*,' James Connolly perceived Lalor as a champion of working-class democracy, and called him an "apostle of revolutionary socialism." Patrick (Pádraig) Pearse also referred to Lalor as "the immediate ancestor of the specifically democratic part of the movement, embodied today in the more virile labour organisation."[7]

A 2019 article by '*Tribune*' also reminded readers that Jim Connell, a native of County Meath, wrote the world-renowned socialist anthem 'The Red Flag.' Connell was both a Fenian and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). He did not support the "bourgeois politics" of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and would refer to Tim Healy, then an MP for the IPP (who would later serve as the first Governor-General of the Irish Free State), as a "little office boy."[8]

This clearly radical undercurrent, evident in the Fenian proclamations and the writings of figures like Lalor and Connell, did not fade with the passage of time, but instead resurfaced with renewed vigour in the early 20th century, shaping the ideology of the Easter Rising's leaders. As Ireland grappled with industrial unrest, such as the 1913 Dublin Lockout, revolutionaries like Patrick Pearse and James Connolly wove socialist principles into the fabric of republicanism, envisioning a republic that transcended mere administrative independence to address economic injustice and class oppression. Pearse's poetry and prose, in particular, echoed the internationalist calls of socialist anthems, blending Gaelic cultural revivalism with a critique of capitalism that would define the 1916 Proclamation and

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[7] *Daly, Mary (2009). 'Lalor, James Fintan.' Dictionary of Irish Biography.*

[8] *Burtenshaw, R (2019). 'Red Flag, Green Roots.' Tribune.*

influence the IRA's developing social agenda in the turbulent years that followed.

As noted in the Irish Academic Press' '*The Impact of the 1916 Rising: Among the Nations*,' the language, imagery and ideas of Pádraig Pearse's 'The Rebel' are strikingly radical and echo the socialist songs that circulated widely in the early twentieth century. 'The Internationale,' for instance, in its English version, calls on workers to "arise". Pearse implies that such a rising has already taken place, at least in a mental or ideological sense. Both 'The Internationale' and 'The Rebel' depict ordinary people as oppressed by tyrants and bound in chains - imagery that corresponds closely with Pearse's reference to "manacles". In both cases the tone is forceful and urgent: they proclaim that injustice has reached its limit and that liberation can only be achieved through popular action. James Connolly's 'A Rebel Song', published in '*The Socialist*' in 1903, offers another close parallel. Its vocabulary - with words such as "tyrants", "manhood", "chain", "serf", "slave", and its condemnation of oppressive laws - closely resembles that of 'The Rebel' and much of Pearse's writing. Both Connolly and Pearse announce an imminent overturning of the conditions endured by the enslaved and downtrodden. This does not mean that Pearse was directly borrowing from these particular songs. The prophetic voice and symbolic language of 'The Rebel' belong to a much older tradition of Irish political poetry stretching back to the sixteenth century, a tradition Pearse knew well both academically and personally. The book asserts that, even so, it is reasonable to consider the socialist associations carried by this vocabulary when interpreting the poem. Written only three years after the Dublin Lockout, 'The Rebel' reflects Pearse's awareness of the socialist resonances of his word choices. The poem's international outlook also deserves attention: its call for freedom is not limited to Ireland alone. Socialist writing also helps illuminate Pearse's use of "blood" imagery. In Connolly's song, blood represents life itself, drained from workers by "wage slavery". Another well-known socialist anthem, 'The Red Flag' - written by a Fenian from County Meath - similarly links blood with solidarity, shared identity and the

moral force of heroic sacrifice, even when that blood is shed. These associations were deeply embedded in the political language of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 'The Rebel', this deeper, more basic meaning of blood is central, as shown in the line "I am of the blood of serfs." Yet the poem's rhythm and movement do not most closely resemble traditional nationalist or even Fenian ballads. Instead, its nearest stylistic model appears to be Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself'. Later in the text, it is asserted that:

> *"Pearse blends the mystic promises of emancipation found in the Aisling poetry of the Gaelic tradition of his relations with the self-help credo of international socialism."*[9]

In regards to Pearse's political ideas, it has been documented that he was firmly on the side of labour against capital. Following the Dublin Lockout of 1913, he observed that:

> "*My instinct is with the landless man against the lord of lands, and with the bread-less man against the master of millions*."

Additionally, in '*The Sovereign People*,' he opined that:

> "*No private right of property is good as against the public right of the nation. But the nation is under a moral obligation so to exercise its public right as to secure strictly equal rights and liberties to every man and woman within the nation … It is for the nation to determine to what extent private property may be held by its members and in what items of the nation's material resources private property shall be allowed … Let no man be mistaken as to who will*

[9] *'Impact of the 1916 Rising: Among the Nations.' Irish Academic Press (2008).*

be lord in Ireland when Ireland is free. The people will be lord and master."[10]

In the 1916 Easter Rising, the celebrated Marxist trade union leader,[11] James Connolly (who had opposed the 'Home Rule' concept of a domestic parliament alone as middle class, capitalist, and unlikely to promote social reform), had been handed the role of Vice-President of the "Provisional Government of the Irish Republic" alongside Pádraig Pearse, and Commandant-General of the Dublin Division of the "army of the Irish Republic," and, as per the National Library of Ireland's own 1916 online exhibition, had contributed to the Easter Rising 1916 Irish Republican Proclamation's various "socialist, feminist and egalitarian elements."[12] The BBC's archived online exhibition also notes that the 1916 Proclamation contains "socialist principles."[13]

As seen in the early part of this text, newspapers that openly supported the constitutional nationalism of the-then popular Irish Party strongly condemned the Easter Rising, alluding to a "red" or "socialist" streak in the event.

The subsequently created IRA was soon suspected by the mainstream press of possessing a radical social agenda from its earliest days. An '*Evening Herald*' editorial from June 1918 pointed out how the '*Irish Times*' proclaimed that

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[10] Harrington, G (2018). 'Patrick Pearse: A Revolutionary Democrat.' Socialist Voice.

[11] Britannica Editors. "James Connolly". Encyclopedia Britannica, 1 Jun. 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-Connolly.

[12] 'The Seven Signatories of the Proclamation - James Connolly, Vice-President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic.' National Library of Ireland 1916 Exhibition.' https://www.nli.ie/1916/exhibition/en/content/sevensignatories/jamesconnolly/

[13] 'Wars & Conflict - 1916 Easter Rising - Insurrection.' BBC. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising/insurrection/in04.shtml

"Bolshevism" had been "rampant throughout nationalist Ireland."[14]

As Michael Joseph Quinn also points out, while no formal recognition was ever ratified, relations between Soviet Russia and the revolutionary Irish Republic began warmly in the revolutionary period of 1919–21, as demonstrated by a draft treaty of recognition, making Soviet Russia the sole state to pursue such a formal diplomatic initiative with the First Dáil's proclaimed republic.[15]

As Chris Bambery highlights in '*Ireland's Permanent Revolution*,' between 1919, when the IRA began its campaign, and 1921, when a treaty was signed with Britain, Irish republicans led a genuine mass struggle against imperialism. The IRA developed into a formidable guerrilla army, particularly in Dublin and also the south-west of Ireland, drawing support from rural labourers and poor farmers. This guerrilla campaign coincided with a surge in working-class militancy: in the four years after 1916, the IT&GWU grew from 5,000 to over 100,000 members; in April 1918, there was a famed general stoppage against conscription; February 1919 saw general strikes in Limerick and Belfast over military repression and working hours; and in May 1920, a strike supported IRA prisoners, while rail unions refused to transport British Crown troops or arms. To gain popular support, Dáil Éireann adopted a 'Democratic Programme' that spoke abstractly of Ireland's land and resources belonging to the people. Yet, this rhetoric masked a fundamental division between property-less Irish workers - who made up most IRA volunteers - and the mainly bourgeois members of the newly assembled Dáil. James Connolly's son, Roddy Connolly, described the IRA to a Moscow conference of the world Communist parties in these words:

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[14] *Evening Herald 15/6/1918*

[15] *Quinn, MJ (2014). 'Irish-Soviet diplomatic and friendship relations, 1919-80.' Maynooth University.*

> *"Its membership consists mostly of proletarians and the peasantry, though on the average officered by the younger members of the petty bourgeoisie and farmers. The majority of the rank and file look upon the establishment of the Irish Republic as of the first importance, and are inclined to defer the solution of social problems to the successful establishment of this aim . . . The conglomeration of classes comprising Sinn Féin necessarily causes antagonism to develop within the party."*

Bambery points out that, during the initial war, the republican movement sought to keep economic questions separate from the fight for independence in order to maintain this fragile class alliance, relying on the leaders of the labour movement. Within IRA ranks, strict military discipline helped prevent debates from becoming unmanageable. However, as land and factory occupations increased, the republican leadership grew concerned. The Dáil secretary observed that:

> *"The mind of the people was being diverted from the struggle for freedom by class war . . . There was a moment when it seemed that nothing could prevent wholesale expropriation."*

The success of the Russian Revolution had loomed large in their considerations. Newly established courts occasionally upheld property rights of Unionist gentry, and some IRA units had even blocked land seizures. However, in the civil war that followed, anti-Treaty republicans retained the sympathy of most workers and rural labourers, but some leaders such as Eamon de Valera still hoped for compromise. In contrast, the new Irish Free State used counter-revolutionary terror to restore "order". For example, central IRA leaders were executed, prisoners were killed, thousands of republicans were interned, and dissenting views were often censored.[16]

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[16] *Bambery, Chris (2014). 'Ireland's Permanent Revolution.' Bookmarks Publishing Co-operative.*

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In reference to what had been described in a historical news article as the "Red commandants" in rural County Carlow, Kieran Allen points out in '*1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition*' (Pluto Press) that the idea of a 'Red Terror' in Carlow doesn't easily align with the familiar narrative of a clean fight against the British Crown. To modern readers, accustomed to the standard, superficial account of the Irish War of Independence, this may seem surprising. Yet there is important context: Ireland was undergoing both national and social upheaval. At the same time, large landowners were forming a 'farmers' freedom force' to suppress labour, socialism, and Bolshevism. The labourers were challenging a haughty landowning class accustomed to obedience. Unlike factory settings, the number of workers relative to employers was small, and union members were scattered over a wide area. Together, these factors made the struggles of the landless take on a violent character.

The text also points out how, by the 21st century, the goals of the movement had been largely forgotten, with Allen opining:

> "*Nor is any element of Pearse's vision or, still less Connolly's, evident in the 26-county state. Pearse's cultural nationalism is nowhere to be seen and his demand for full sovereignty has simply disappeared. His claim that the nation had to take full control of its natural resources has simply been ignored, as ownership of oil and gas is handed to major global corporations such as Shell or Statoil. Currently, Ireland has one of the lowest government takes from its oil and gas reserves in the world. The state has gone to great length to support this state of affairs by deploying the police force to break popular resistance in Rossport, Co. Mayo, where Shell was trying to develop a gas pipeline. Connolly's revolutionary socialism is simply an embarrassment to a state that has become a tax haven for multi-national corporations*."

Allen also highlights how goals and priorities of some of the individuals involved had drifted as time went on. For example, he mentions how until recently, most Irish governments have counted at least one former IRA leader among their members. This includes ex-chiefs of staff like Frank Aiken and Seán MacBride. From more recent times, Martin McGuinness, who became a minister in the Northern Ireland Executive, can also be added. All of these figures once pledged loyalty to 'the men of 1916,' yet each eventually took more comfortable positions at the cabinet tables of the two partitioned states. He remarks that the tragic pattern of Irish republicanism shows its participants repeatedly engaging in armed struggle, only for their leaders later to reconcile with Irish capitalism. This history, he notes, raises serious questions about the supposed synthesis of socialism and republicanism. Allen points out how those who ultimately established the Free State, such as Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins were individuals primarily focused on a militaristic campaign and, apart from support for co-operatives, detested an otherwise more radical social agenda or anything that may be associated with hardline socialism. Allen remarks that although the Irish revolutionary tradition offered a critique of the existing order, it was also full of ambiguities. It was a complex tradition, combining elements of militant republicanism and socialism. This mixture arose from the pairing of the primarily cultural nationalist, Pearse, with the revolutionary socialist, Connolly. James Connolly's politics, which at times sought a revolutionary impetus within republicanism, further helped to unite the two strands. Yet, a fundamental paradox lay at the heart of modern Irish republicanism. It portrayed itself as a determined and disciplined force, capable of ending partition and imperialist control. Yet in almost every generation, its leaders had moved from opposing the system to participating in it. A recurring pattern emerged: the most fervent advocates of armed struggle became the strongest proponents of compromise. Meanwhile, as the former fighters became respectable politicians, some of their former comrades broke away and once again looked to the military wing as the guardian of pure principles. The history of Irish republicanism, Allen noted, had followed a repeating cycle:

armed struggle, compromise, split - and then the cycle began again. This pattern stemmed from the movement's nationalist roots and its instrumental approach to social struggles. Republicans had supported workers' rights or anti-austerity efforts when they were seen as advancing the nation, yet they also justified participation in US-backed peace initiatives or a neoliberal Northern executive when these were perceived as serving national interests. These conflicting tendencies allowed republicanism to express a vision for a better Ireland, but limited its ability to realise that vision politically. Nevertheless, despite its various contradictions, the Irish revolutionary tradition remained, in his view, a valuable asset. It made the idea of revolution less alien to the public than in nations shaped by centuries of gradual reform. The memory of the Rising also offered a reference point for left-wing activists seeking to popularise their ideas. While socialism generally began with an analysis of capitalism's dynamics, it also needed to connect with the particular traditions that influenced workers' consciousness in each country. In Ireland, he claims, the revolutionary left would have advanced more effectively if it had drawn on the anti-colonial spirit that inspired the 1916 rebellion.[17]

As much as it has been said that Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith possessed a narrow social or economic vision when contrasted against their priorities in the armed campaign, the two men were nonetheless the driving force behind the creation of the Sinn Féin Co-operative People's Bank, showing that even the most conservative of those involved in the Revolution had a preference for alternatives to the conventional financial system.[18]

Furthermore, Dr. Patrick M. Doyle has also pointed out that co-operative economic concepts gained enormous traction among the Sinn Féin-affiliated Irish nationalists. The modernising goal of the co-operative movement is believed

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[17] *Allen, K (2016). '1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition.' Pluto Press.*

[18] *O'Sullivan-Greene, P (2020). 'Crowdfunding the Revolution: The First Dáil Loan and the Battle for Irish Independence.' Eastwood Books.*

to have been ingrained in the Irish countryside and entangled in a revolutionary nationalism-based political economy.[19]

Erhard Rumpf, writing in 1977, outlines that with Eamon de Valera's departure from Sinn Féin and the constitutional Fianna Fáil party's entry into the Dáil in 1927, the hard-left core within the republican movement was finally in a position to challenge for overall control of the IRA. In November 1927, Michael Fitzpatrick, a member of IRA headquarters (GHQ) and president of the Friends of Soviet Russia in Ireland, led a ten-man delegation to Moscow for the October Revolution celebrations, declaring that it was their mission to convince Irish workers that their hope and salvation lay with Soviet Russia. The IRA newspaper '*An Phoblacht*' increasingly adopted a more radical tone, asserting that "parliaments are for museums" and would always betray revolutions. That year, two IRA delegates attended the founding of the Soviet-inspired Anti-Imperialist League in Brussels, and when the League held its first meeting in Dublin the following year, the IRA supplied the principal speakers. IRA members were again present at the 1929 Frankfurt Congress, where the imprisoned IRA volunteer Magennis was elected honorary president in a gesture of solidarity with Irish republicans. In 1930, the European Peasants' Committee established its first cells in a Western European country with the IRA's assistance.

In response to a summer 1931 IRA convention, a new Irish organisation, Saor Éire, was formed to revive radicalism among small farmers and workers. At its first congress, it proclaimed:

> *"Long live the unity of Irish and European working farmers. Long live the alliance of town workers and working farmers."*

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[19] *Doyle, P (2013). ''Better, Farming, Better Business, Better Living': The Irish Co-operative Movement and the Construction of the Irish Nation-State, 1894-1932.' University of Manchester.*

Its goal was to unite small farmers, agricultural workers, and urban labourers under one republican movement, bypassing the leadership of trade unions, which were viewed as insufficiently revolutionary. Saor Éire had achieved rapid success, converting IRA units into its branches almost overnight, and the IRA as a whole was described by historians as being on the verge of "a giant step to the left." At its first congress in September 1931, Saor Éire openly expressed solidarity with Soviet Russia and endorsed collectivisation as the only viable national land policy. Although Saor Éire was swiftly suppressed by co-ordinated action from the Church and police, the defeat did not diminish the influence of the left within the republican movement; it may even have strengthened it temporarily. In early 1933, IRA leaders championed the case of James Gralton, an Irish-born American facing expulsion from Ireland for promoting communist ideas. Interestingly, IRA leaders showed greater concern than Gralton's Communist Party itself, and even though broader support, including from local leaders in County Leitrim, was limited, the episode firmly associated the IRA with communism in public perception. This association was not inaccurate, as the IRA's new constitution proposed the nationalisation of land and industry, alongside measures for agricultural marketing and goods distribution.[20]

Mike Millotte, discussing the IRA in '*Communism in Modern Ireland: The Pursuit of the Workers' Republic since 1916*' (Gill & Macmillan), outlines how in in June 1931, 20,000 republicans ignored a government ban to take part in the annual Wolfe Tone commemoration, where Peadar O'Donnell gave a speech with a distinctly communist tone. The IRA executive had recently joined the Friends of Soviet Russia as an organisation, and Dave Fitzgerald, Saor Éire's organising secretary, had spent August and September in Moscow. Just days after his return, Saor Éire was formally established as a political party. All of this fuelled the fears of those obsessed with the 'red scare'. In September 1931,

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[20] *Rumpf, E (1977). 'Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland.' Liverpool University Press.*

Minister for Justice, James Fitzgerald-Kenney, had warned that the IRA's 'Saor Éire' organisation had aimed "to force by means of threats and crimes a republic of a Soviet nature on this country." The small Revolutionary Workers' Groups (RWGs) and other pre-existing communist organisations avoided the 1931 Wolfe Tone commemoration, becoming intimidated by the progress of the IRA and its Saor Éire platform, whose declared goals were "remarkably similar to their own." The declared aim was:

> *"To achieve an independent revolutionary leadership for the working class and working farmers towards the overthrow in Ireland of British imperialism and Irish capitalism."*

Also stated was the goal of building:

> *"Councils of action among the industrial and agricultural workers to lead the day-to-day struggles."*

As Milotte points out, both camps were competing for the same ground. Following a clampdown by both the Church and the State on "Godless Communism," the IRA was outraged at being deemed anti-Christian. Eamonn Corbett, Chairman of Galway County Council and a leading figure in Saor Éire, called for a meeting between the Bishops, the Papal Nuncio and the banned organisations to dispel what he referred to as the "misconceptions" around "communism" as he saw it. However, such an attempt was futile.[21]

In reviewing a work by Professor Brian Hanley, a feature in '*History Ireland*' points out that the social radicalism of the IRA throughout the 1920s and 1930s was indeed genuine and arose out of the harsh economic realities of the period.[22]

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[21] *Millotte, M (1984). 'Communism in Modern Ireland: The Pursuit of the Workers' Republic since 1916'. Gill & Macmillan.*

[22] *'The IRA, 1926-1936.' History Ireland https://historyireland.com/the-ira-1926-193/*

As documented by '*Jacobin*,' the leaders of the institution of the Catholic Church in Ireland were extremely hostile to anything that appeared communistic, due to the anti-Church policies enacted by the Soviet Union. When the IRA launched the socialist political organisation, Saor Éire, it drew a comparable backlash. In 1931, prompted by Cumann na nGaedheal, the pro-Treaty party then in government, the Catholic hierarchy instructed priests throughout Ireland to read an official denunciation of Saor Éire to their congregations. The campaign against the IRA would continue after the period documented in this text. For example, the Cold War profoundly influenced the religious practices of many ordinary Irish Catholics. At Knock, County Mayo - the site of a reported Marian apparition in 1879 - thousands of pilgrims gathered each year and were frequently encouraged to pray for the conversion of Russia, China, and other atheistic communist nations to Catholicism. Ireland's version of the Catholic 'Cold War' also had a domestic aspect. Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, an admirer of J. Edgar Hoover, believed that left-wing activities should be carefully watched. In a confidential 1963 report on communism in Ireland, he recounted telling the late Pope Pius XII that "the good state of Catholic life in Dublin can only be secured by unending vigilance." McQuaid's archives show that priests working under his direction compiled extensive intelligence on Irish communist activity. Their information came from police sources, military intelligence, Catholic organisations such as the Knights of St Columbanus and the CTSI, individual informants, and even a Taoiseach - John A. Costello of Fine Gael. This surveillance network went far beyond the Soviet-aligned Irish Workers' League. It also targeted a broad spectrum of groups seen as susceptible to communist influence, including the Labour Party, the trade union and unemployed movements, the IRA, women's organisations such as the Irish Housewives' Association, and campaigns promoting pacifism and nuclear disarmament.[23]

Furthermore, when it came to courting support during the 20th century, support for Irish Republicanism in Great

[23] *Madden, G (2016). 'Defending the Faith.' Jacobin*

Britain had been drawn from, and depended upon, the political Left.[24]

Féilim Ó hAdhmaill writing on 'Uncomfortable 'Truths' and the Centenary Anniversary of the 1916 Rising in Ireland' for the Socialist History Society in 2016 (as logged in the University College Cork Open Research Archive), the type of Ireland fought for by many Republicans turned out to be very different from the one that ultimately transpired. A Republic based on social equality had been the aim.[25]

There is a tendency amongst the general population to perceive and remember non-constitutional republicanism through romanticised, rose-tinted glasses - that the movement was essentially the same as the American Revolution of 1770s. Sometimes, to suggest it was anything otherwise can cause individuals to become aggressive, bitter and defensive. This interpretation can often cause extensive 'cognitive dissonance' when a very different interpretation is put forward based on archival information sourced from the "horse's mouth" itself. As my personal research into primary sources expanded further and further, it became ever-more apparent to me that, as the Anti-Treaty IRA defined itself in the 1920s and 1930s, it only denied being Communist-inspired in the sense that the word 'Communist' was a synonym for being "anti-God." As most IRA members were practising Christians or Roman Catholics (albeit being excommunicated and made outcasts by the Catholic Church authorities in Ireland), they may have at times been reluctant or up-tight when they were described using such a word. That the IRA was fervently anti-capitalist and explored concepts such as Distributism, Communism and, to a fringe extent, Fascism/National Socialism, is indisputable. Through its own propaganda organs and addresses by its senior figures, the IRA openly promoted revolutionary socialist

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[24] Smith & Worley (2018). 'The British Left and Ireland in the Twentieth Century.' Contemporary British History 32(4):437-447.

[25] Ó hAdhmaill, F. (2016) 'Uncomfortable 'truths' and the centenary anniversary of the 1916 Rising in Ireland', Socialist History, 49. University College Cork Open Research Archive.

principles as part of the broader 'anti-imperialist' package. These organs willingly described themselves as socialist/ communist in the sense of pre-Conquest Gaelic collectivism, or in the manner of religious orders and the perceived "communism" of the early Church - what they sought to distinguish was that their 'brand' of such was not the "atheistic" variant that had since been embraced in Soviet Russia. Constitutional left-leaning movements such as Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party were frequently castigated as insufficiently radical in the public domain by the IRA. That non-constitutional Republicans (i.e., the IRA) became disillusioned with the pro-Constitutional Fianna Fáil party of Eamon de Valera in a relatively short space of time is also clearly evident. Only when the 'Red Scare' seemed destined to destroy the IRA's appeal for prospective members did it attempt to tone-down its rhetoric (even so, it cited different sources to justify its anti-capitalist position), resulting in substantial internal fighting. Numerous leading IRA figures had explicit ties to Soviet Russian-backed causes. It is clear, then, that the sanitised image of non-constitutional Republicanism as popularly remembered is somewhat distinct from the gritty and radical actuality of the 1920s-1930s, in an Ireland characterised by immense poverty and hardship, with conditions only further exacerbated by the Great Depression.

The IRA-backed '*An Phoblacht*' also made its place as the leading radical organ and its non-constitutional stance clear, declaring in a piece from 7 September 1929 that it boasted up to 14,000 readers and that:

> *"Not being the organ of any clique or any political party, we can live up to our motto - " The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." We serve neither Cosgravians nor Constitutionalists - we serve Ireland only."*

The leading Irish Republican and suffragist (as well as being a former political director of Sinn Féin), Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, would travel to the Soviet Union as an Irish delegate of the Friends of Soviet Russia to learn about its

system of governance. The '*Dictionary of Irish Biography*' notes that, as with many of her peers, she remained an active advocate of communism. Notably, she was a contributor to '*An Phoblacht*' and subsequently took on the role of assistant editor, a position she also held with its successor organ, '*Republican File*.'[26]

It would go to show that exactly what sort of Republic one pursues is just as important as the idea of pursuing a Republic itself. After all, Oliver Cromwell, who eliminated the English Crown and established the Puritan 'Protectorate,' has been described by '*History Ireland*' as arguably the technical "father of Irish republicanism."[27] Technically, this would be correct - Cromwell was the first person to lead a Republic comprising all of Ireland (albeit, lead from England).[28] Of course, the name of Oliver Cromwell is one of infamy in Ireland, with a feature by '*History UK*' querying if he was "the most hated man in Irish history."[29] If the sole objective of the IRA was to remove the monarchy from Ireland, then Cromwell was objectively more successful than it. Surely, then, the IRA would seek not to re-establish a regime on such lines? This is why querying exactly what sort of Republic they believed in is so important.

As Conor Kostick (a renowned academic and historian) pointed out, the claim that Ireland was too rural, too heavily influenced by the Church, and too bound to a conservative peasant mindset to undergo a social revolution at this time is contradicted by the evidence. These years saw almost

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[26] 'Skeffington, (Johanna) Hanna Sheehy-'. Dictionary of Irish Biography (2009).

[27] 'Oliver Cromwell: Father of Irish Republicanism?' History Ireland (2010). https://historyireland.com/oliver-cromwell-father-of-irish-republicanism/

[28] Hunt, A (2024). 'Republic: Britain's Revolutionary Decade, 1649-1660.' Faber.

[29] 'Oliver Cromwell: The Most Hated Man in Irish History?' History UK. https://www.history.co.uk/shows/al-murray-why-does-everyone-hate-the-english/articles/oliver-cromwell-the-most-hated-man-in

continuous class conflict in rural areas. In the east, where large farmers owned most of the land and a rural working class laboured on it, remarkable confrontations took place - including incidents such as trains being derailed - as agricultural workers struggled to improve their living conditions. There were also episodes that echoed the imagery of the First World War, with "red" forces of rural labourers clashing against the "white" units of the Farmers' Freedom Force (FFF). In the west, where vast areas of land remained in the hands of absentee landlords, the conflict manifested in small farmers dismantling large estates, or in some instances seizing them collectively and running them as soviets. His central conclusion, therefore, was that the working-class movement between 1916 and 1923 in particular was vital to the national struggle. Had it not been for the readiness of hundreds of thousands of workers to engage in boycotts, strikes, demonstrations, and protests, the military efforts of the roughly three thousand IRA volunteers who managed to obtain arms (though the total membership number was higher than this) would not have been enough to compel the London Cabinet to opt for negotiation towards a Treaty in the first place, instead of repression.[30]

As noted by David Convery, the pro-Treaty camp drew backing from the business and landowning classes, as well as the Catholic Church leadership and most members of the professions - groups republicans like Liam Mellows mocked as having a "stake in the country." Yet the situation was more complex: the pro-Treaty National Army also included several thousands of working-class men, many of whom enlisted because it provided stable employment at a time of widespread joblessness and the demobilisation of former British soldiers. Support for the anti-Treaty cause, by contrast, was strongest among the working class and the rural poor of Munster and Connacht. He also notes that, of the two films depicting the conflict, being Hollywood's pro-Treaty leaning 'Michael Collins' (starring Liam Neeson) and the

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[30] *Kostick, C. 'The Irish Working Class and the War of Independence.' https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/irishmr/vol04/no14/kostick.pdf*

Cannes' winning film '*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*' (starring Cillian Murphy) that puts greater emphasis on the fight as a social revolution, it is the latter that provides the most accurate depiction. The fledgling Free State soon asserted its authority, crushing a postal strike in the autumn of 1922. The Irish Farmers' Union mounted boycotts and, in some instances, deployed a "white guard" to break strikes and dismantle workplace soviets by force. Workers, meanwhile, responded by blockading or even damaging the property of employers and landowners, and at times compelled them to quit the district. Ultimately, however, the National Army frequently stepped in to restore workplaces to their capital owners, a decisive factor in the conflict.[31]

Even an RTÉ history feature by Gavin Foster from 2023 acknowledges that a 'class-war' element formed part of the Civil War conflict between the National Government and the Anti-Treaty IRA.[32] As John Dorney noted in an article for the 'Irish Story,' Foster highlighted in his academic book '*The Irish Civil War and Society*' that genuine class conflict - competing economic interests coming to blows - played a significant role in the Civil War. In the countryside, those without land frequently occupied it during the turmoil, at times with the protection of the anti-Treaty IRA. Meanwhile, government figures such as Kevin O'Higgins and Patrick Hogan feared that society was sliding into chaos. In response, they created the Special Infantry Corps, essentially a State paramilitary force tasked with quelling disturbances that fell outside the primary campaign but were too intense for the newly formed Civic Guard to handle. So alarmed were Free State Ministers by what they saw as social "anarchy" that they established an entirely new Army Corps to confront it. Its most substantial operation involved helping to suppress a farm labourers' strike in County Waterford,

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[31] Convery, D (2022). 'Ireland's Civil War Ended in Victory for the Irish Counterrevolution.' Jacobin.

[32] Foster, G (2023). 'What does the Civil War really tell us about social divisions in the early 1920s? A three minute guide.' https://www.rte.ie/history/2023/0222/1358246-a-three-minute-guide-to-social-class-and-the-civil-war-divide/

where its forces ultimately exchanged fire with local IRA units supporting the strikers.[33]

The IRA also resorted to armed robbery to pursue their goals. In the Provisional Government-led Dáil of 1922, the government mentioned 319 armed men's assaults on the Great Southern and Western Railway between 1 March and 22 April, as well as 331 raids on post offices between 23 March and 19 April. Pro-Treaty politician and military leader Richard Mulcahy said that a lot of things were "done under cover of the declaration of the Belfast Boycott." There were organised attacks on branches of the National Bank (the Provisional Government's bankers) on 1 May, when roughly £50,000 was robbed, and had taken place by command of the IRA's Army Executive.[34]

During the Civil War, the new State Government saw their objective as not only eliminating the military danger to the Free State posed by the Anti–Treaty IRA, but also addressing the economic and social instability caused by nearly five years of militant agitation from the rural poor and the urban working class. In 1923, the National Army (along with the previously mentioned Special Infantry Corps) was also used to subdue workers' co-operatives and councils. The Pro–Treaty Government became increasingly characterised by its resistance to radicalism and was bolstered by influential constituencies that insisted on decisive state action to eradicate what they saw as 'Bolshevism.' At the beginning of a major postal dispute, the administration denied public workers the ability to withdraw their labour and engage in strike action. The postal workers were criticised for initiating industrial action at a challenging economic period characterised by high unemployment, since they had permanent, pensionable roles within the public sector. When the Postal Strike of 1922 occurred, measures were implemented to limit the postal workers' ability to engage in

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[33] 'Book Review: The Irish Civil War and Society, Politics Class and Conflict.' The Irish Story 16/9/2025.

[34] Hopkinson, M (1988). 'Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War.' Gill and MacMillan.

peaceful picketing, and they faced ongoing harassment by the State military. In light of the unfolding Civil War, several members of the new administration had characterised it as a 'stab in the back.' The Government's attitude towards the postal strikes undermines the assertion that 1922 marked 'the inception of Irish Democracy' and that the Irish Free State embodied legality, tolerance, and compromise. Their handling of the postal strike demonstrates an intolerance for dissent, and a readiness to use severe measures to quell it.[35]

As you will see unfolding in this text, radical workers' entities in particular had been a pervasive influence in mobilising the IRA - from its earliest days, up to the period in which this book ends. This influence can be seen in every way, from providing practical and tactical support in key moments, substantial dual involvement amongst members, and trade union marching bands supporting various IRA rallies and commemorations.

The class dimensions present in the Civil War, far from being peripheral, exposed the deep fissures within Irish society and set the stage for the IRA's post-Treaty transformation into a more explicitly socialist force, as anti-Treaty republicans sought to reclaim the revolutionary promise of 1916 amid economic hardship and partition. With the Free State's consolidation of power through repression of strikes and land occupations, disillusioned IRA elements increasingly aligned with radical workers' movements, drawing inspiration from global upheavals like the Russian Revolution. This alliance not only fuelled the formation of organisations like Saor Éire but also intensified debates over private property and nationalisation, as seen in IRA manifestos and publications, though it ultimately invited fierce opposition from the Church and State, hastening the movement's fragmentation and decline by the late 1930s.

It is important to note that, rather than enjoying broad public support, the IRA's membership had actually collapsed

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[35] *Brennan, C (2012). 'The Postal Strike of 1922.' The Irish Story. https://www.theirishstory.com/2012/06/08/the-postal-strike-of-1922/*

following the split and subsequent conflict, and that a response to the social conditions of the time would contribute to its later re-growth. Approximately 2,000 Anti-Treaty IRA volunteers succumbed during the Civil War, while over 10,000 were apprehended and incarcerated. A substantial number of Anti-Treaty IRA members went underground after the Civil War. Though many of them would embrace later compromise, individuals who persisted in the IRA maintained their repudiation of parliamentary politics. IRA membership declined swiftly in the 1920s, decreasing to slightly over 5,000 by 1925, and to under 2,000 by 1930. However, these figures saw a major turnaround and escalated to approximately 10,000 in the 1930s, driven by the radicalising hardships of the Great Depression.[36]

A history feature by RTÉ points to the IRA's eventual attempts to slow down its haemorrhaging of members. Veterans of the revolution, especially those who opposed the Treaty during the 1922-23 Civil War, were a notable faction among an exodus of people from Ireland, including several thousand Volunteers and former prisoners, along with many disenchanted republican sympathisers. Similar to the majority of Irish emigrants during this era, this 'lost legion' was mostly compelled by Ireland's feeble economy and attracted by superior economic opportunities in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. Nevertheless, republican 'wild geese' attributed this exile to political constraints, including police persecution, blacklisting, and the overall hostile nature of what they saw as the illegitimate Irish Free State. The departure of members led to the fragmentation of the post-civil war IRA, bolstering political and social stability in the early Free State but also intensifying Fianna Fáil's constitutional opposition to the new order. This event merits recognition as a pivotal moment in Ireland's extensive history of mass emigration and as an overlooked social consequence of the revolution and Civil War. In early 1924, IRA commands facing significant unemployment had petitioned the GHQs for permission to release personnel owing to

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[36] *'The IRA: 1919-1968.' Alpha History (2018).* https://alphahistory.com/northernireland/ira-1919-1968/

economic hardship; however, the IRA Executive denied the request, prompting many regional commanders to quit in protest. In response to unsuccessful attempts to obtain funding and establish local employment initiatives, the IRA leadership reacted to reports of significant numbers of men departing Ireland by relaxing its policies and granting retroactive clearances. In 1925, the IRA, having seen additional attrition, substituted its permission system with a 'Foreign Reserve' that facilitated long-term emigration (up to five years) for economic purposes. Although hundreds were later enlisted in this activity, the initiative eventually failed, resulting in most participants becoming permanent exiles.[37]

In '*Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937*' by Richard English, it is again stressed how the 1930s opened with an intense discussion about social radicalism within the republican movement. In November 1930, Moss Twomey, the Irish Republican Army's chief of staff, issued a draft constitution entitled 'The Sovereignty of the People: Suggestions for a Constitution for an Irish Republic.' In it, he argued that the nation or community held broad rights over natural resources and economic activity. Twomey's proposals ignited vigorous debate, particularly around the question of private property.[38]

Furthermore, as reported in '*An Phoblacht*,' following a General Convention "composed of elected delegates of all the Volunteer units in the whole of Ireland," in January 1933, the IRA issued a manifesto to the public, which contained the following:

> "*We believe the re-organisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people.*

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[37] *'"Wild geese": IRA emigration and settlement after the Revolution.' RTÉ (2023).*

[38] *English, R (1994). 'Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937'. Oxford University Press.*

> *We are in favour of separating our financial system from the British, not to give Irish bankers power over Irish life, but to guarantee to the Irish people the power to avail themselves of the wealth their industry creates out of the natural resources which are the common inheritance of all our people*."

Additionally, in '*The IRA, 1926-1936*,' Prof. Brian Hanley also notes that the IRA's 'Constitution of Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland' from 1934 was "much further to the left of anything the Irish Labour Party advocated in that period." It is clear, then, where the economic outlook of the IRA rested. He also notes that, from 1928, the Comintern-backed Irish section of the 'League against Imperialism' was lead by leading IRA figures such as Sean MacBride and Sean MacSwiney. Tom Barry, despite remarking that the IRA should have no social policy at all in 1932, would declare two years later that he did not fight in the famous Crossbarry ambush so that Irish workers would be exploited by the employers.

However, they would run low on steam by the mid-1940s. Resurgent I.R.A. activities in the 1930s, after a period of diminished republican violence, was generating increasing apprehension within the Fianna Fáil administration. The increase in I.R.A. activities occurred at a period of vulnerability for the organisation. The leadership was more fragmented on strategy, its popularity had plummeted, and some members had come to terms with de Valera and affiliated with Fianna Fáil instead. The swift deterioration of the Blueshirts post-1933, with their prohibition and the establishment of Fine Gael, paradoxically inflicted a dual setback on the I.R.A., removing an adversary while simultaneously allowing security agencies to concentrate more on the republicans. De Valera's tolerance for the I.R.A. had significantly diminished, and in the years before 1939, he had been gradually intensifying pressure on his former associates. In 1935, his administration reacted to I.R.A. provocations with a succession of raids and arrests, culminating in the suppression of the main republican publication, '*An Phoblacht*.' In June 1936, the I.R.A. was

again designated an illegal organisation, and its chief of staff, Maurice 'Moss' Twomey, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a military tribunal. As the stringent Cosgrave-era Public Safety Act was set to expire with the implementation of the new Constitution, deliberations had been ongoing within the Fianna Fáil government since late 1937 regarding new legislation that would empower State authorities to combat political violence. This was a contentious issue for Fianna Fáil, particularly since it had vehemently condemned W.T. Cosgrave's repressive security legislation when in opposition. In January 1939, when the I.R.A initiated a bombing campaign in Britain resulting in seven fatalities and two-hundred injuries, the Department of Justice received authorisation to formulate new security legislation, with explicit directives to modify the terminology from the Cosgrave administration as extensively as feasible. The Offences Against the State Act was officially enacted on 14 June 1939. The Act, which remains largely unaltered on the statute books currently, had greater protections for due process and the rule of law than the measures from the Cosgrave period, although it was still very contentious. It empowered the government to prohibit membership in designated organisations, possession of seditious materials, and the convening of certain assemblies.[39]

The IRA remained resolute in its pursuit of complete Irish independence and rejected the legitimacy of both existing States in Ireland. In Northern Ireland, the IRA encountered suppression, arrests, and a singular execution by the Stormont administration during this time; but, it experienced the most severe repression under the Fianna Fáil government led by Éamon de Valera in the State of Éire. The Offences Against the State Act 1939, followed by the Emergency Powers Act 1940 (which had permitted state executions/ capital punishment upon convictions for certain offences), had significant repercussions. Consequently, mass arrests, incarcerations, and executions were to become commonplace for the IRA in subsequent years under the State led by Éamon de Valera. By the late 1940s, the IRA as an

[39] *Mac Cormaic, R (2016). 'The Supreme Court.' Penguin Books.*

organisation was ravaged and disheartened.[40] As '*BBC News*' pointed out, De Valera's administration in Éire executed a greater number of IRA militants than the United Kingdom and even enlisted the UK's most renowned executioner, Albert Pierrepoint, to carry out one of the hangings. The Fianna Fáil government also asserted that IRA chief-of-staff, Sean Russell, had previously acted as a Soviet agent. A subsequent attempt by the IRA to draw the support of Nazi Germany ultimately flopped, though the organisation's head of explosives became heavily interested in their National Socialist ideology. Mike Thompson for the BBC observes that de Valera's dedication to achieving Irish liberty via constitutional methods caused him to sever ties with several erstwhile partners. He observes that it is difficult to fathom that this was the same armed Republican who had been involved in the Easter Rising in 1916.[41] In the autumn of 1942, the renowned novelist and poet, Brendan Behan (who had been an IRA volunteer and espoused left-wing views) concluded that the militarist IRA was going nowhere and commented that republicanism "of this particular brand is defunct."[42] As seen in this text, the IRA and other non-constitutional Republicans would also be subject to intense criticism from the Fianna Fáil-linked '*Irish Press*' newspaper, with '*An Phoblacht*' reciprocating the same in response.

In terms of the State's structure, an academic study from Queen's University Belfast on administrative continuity in the new State highlights how the public administration and legal instruments carried over many British Crown norms, because the new state's leaders preferred continuity to wholesale disruption. This "principle of continuity"

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[40] Shannon, G (2021). ' 'They were determined to obtain a sacrifice': First Irish state executions of IRA members since the Civil War.' The Irish Story https://www.theirishstory.com/2021/04/12/they-were-determined-to-obtain-a-sacrifice-first-irish-state-executions-of-ira-members-since-the-civil-war/

[41] Thompson, M (2011). 'How De Valera asked UK to smear IRA chief Sean Russell.' BBC News https://www.bbc.com/news/world-12848272

[42] Mulqueen, J & Whelan, F (2026). '"An Insolent Clique" - "ANTIFA" IRA in the 1940s.' History Ireland. https://historyireland.com/an-insolent-clique-antifa-ira-in-the-1940s/

constrained the Dáil and shaped Saorstát Éireann's legal development, reflecting a path-dependence on imperial legal structures that republican purists would find deeply problematic.[43]

In revisiting the social agenda of Irish Republicanism from 1916 to 1940, it becomes evident that the movement's radical ethos - rooted in the organisation of the under-privileged, bluntly anti-capitalist rhetoric, and alliances with global revolutionary currents - challenges the sanitised narratives often enshrined in popular memory. Far from a quest for national parliamentary sovereignty akin to its American counterpart, this era of republicanism envisioned a transformative republic where land, labour, and resources served the masses of the Irish people, not the elite, even as internal contradictions, ecclesiastical opposition, and state suppression curtailed its momentum. By confronting these uncomfortable truths through primary sources and contemporary accounts, we not only resolve the cognitive dissonance between myth and reality, but also illuminate the enduring tensions between cultural nationalism and various brands of anti-capitalism in Ireland's unfinished revolution, themes that the following chapters will explore in greater depth through Irish Republican campaigns, ideologies, and legacies.

"Cad chuige ár gcath? An ar mhaithe le bratach eile amháin?"

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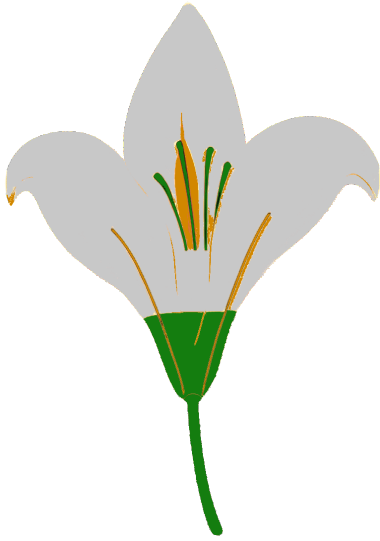
[43] *Biggins, J., MacCarthaigh, M., & Scott, C. (2024). Priming the state: continuity and junctures in the foundation of the Irish administration. Irish Political Studies, 39(2), 162-186 . https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2024.2334489*

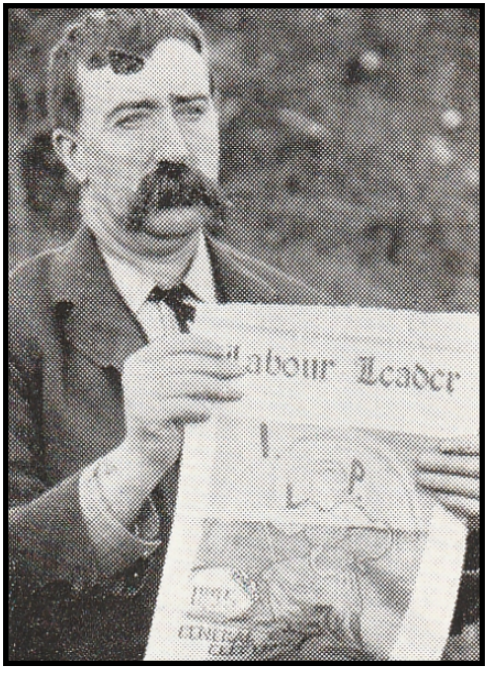


The Republican 'Easter Lily.'

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

"What are we fighting for - is it just to put up another flag?" - Herbert 'Sean' Mitchell, O.C. of the renowned First Cork Brigade and a onetime elected member of the Army Council/Executive, raised this poignant question alongside notable IRA commanders such as J.J. Sheehy (Co. Kerry) and Tom Maguire (Co. Westmeath) at the IRA's landmark 1933 General Army Convention.
(Photo source: Westmeath Independent 12/7/2025)

The famed Terence MacSwiney would declare in 'The Principles of Freedom' that "if the statesmen take a different view from the financiers, the financiers can bring pressure to bear on the statesmen by their international organisation; the capitalist has no country. Well, our comment is, the patriot has a country, and when he wakens to the new danger, he may spoil the capitalist dream."
(Photo source: Irish Independent 21/10/2020)



Jim Connell (a native of County Meath), best known as author of the world-famous song, 'The Red Flag,' was a member of both the Fenians and the Irish Republican Brotherhood. He died in 1929.
(Photo source: Society for the Study of Labour History)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
NOTE ON ARCHIVAL METHOD, TRANSCRIPTION LIMITATIONS, AND EVIDENTIAL STANDARDS

This work constitutes an independent historical study produced outside any institutional, commercial, or formally funded research framework. It is the result of an archival project undertaken on a voluntary basis over an extended period of time, often under conditions that did not permit systematic duplication of sources or the verification procedures available to professional research teams. As such, the author makes no claim to absolute textual infallibility and expressly acknowledges the inherent risks associated with the transcription, collation, and presentation of large quantities of historical material drawn from fragile, incomplete, or degraded archival sources.

A substantial proportion of the primary source material utilised in this study consists of contemporary newspaper reports, editorials, and political commentary accessed via digitised archives, microfilm, or scanned reproductions. These media frequently rely on optical character recognition (OCR) technologies that are known to introduce transcription errors, omit punctuation, misattribute sentence boundaries, or conflate adjacent text blocks. In the course of assembling and comparing multiple reports addressing the same events or controversies, particularly where newspapers employed repetitive or formulaic rhetoric, there exists a limited and trivial possibility that excerpts from closely related sources were inadvertently merged, partially duplicated, or presented in compressed form. Such occurrences, where present, are the result of archival and technical constraints rather than editorial misrepresentation.

Where textual irregularities were evident, the author has exercised editorial judgement solely for the purpose of restoring basic intelligibility and continuity, without altering the substantive meaning, political orientation, or argumentative intent of the original material. No quotation has been knowingly fabricated, materially altered, or

selectively manipulated in order to advance a claim not otherwise supported by the surrounding evidentiary record. Any reconstructed passages should therefore be understood as faithful representations of contemporary discourse, even where precise wording may differ marginally from a single surviving print instance. The highly polemical and repetitive nature of early twentieth-century journalism further complicates precise textual reproduction and must be taken into account when assessing isolated quotations.

It must be stated unambiguously that the historical arguments advanced in this work do not depend upon the exact phrasing of any individual sentence, article, or source. The conclusions presented are derived from patterns of consistency observable across a wide corpus of independent publications, organisations, public statements, and actions over time. Consequently, the identification of minor transcription errors, typographical anomalies, or limited source-level conflations - should any be demonstrated - would not invalidate, materially weaken, or substantially alter the analytical findings of the study as a whole.

The author expressly rejects any attempt to discredit the substance of this work through a selective focus on prospective, isolated textual imperfections divorced from their archival context. Such an approach misconstrues both the nature of historical source material and the standards by which historical arguments are properly evaluated. Readers are instead encouraged to engage with the work on the basis of its cumulative evidential weight, internal coherence, and consistency with the broader historical record.

This statement is provided in the interest of transparency and scholarly good faith. It does not constitute an admission of substantive error, misrepresentation, or negligence, nor should it be interpreted as such. Rather, it reflects a recognition of the practical realities of long-term, independent archival research and a clear delineation between minor technical imperfections and the validity of historical interpretation.

It is further asserted that independent and voluntary researchers are fully entitled to undertake historical projects of substantial scope where such work is pursued in good faith and for legitimate scholarly or intellectual purposes. The absence of institutional affiliation does not diminish the right to engage in archival research, nor does it invalidate the resulting work. Historical inquiry is not the exclusive preserve of professional academics, and no requirement exists - ethical, scholarly, or otherwise - that independent researchers restrict themselves to modest or narrowly defined subjects. To suggest that voluntary or amateur scholars forfeit credibility, or invite exceptional scrutiny, merely by undertaking ambitious research is to adopt a gatekeeping position that is incompatible with the principles of intellectual freedom and open historical inquiry.

Accordingly, the author rejects any expectation that hobby-based, independent research be subjected to disproportionate hostility, adversarial interrogation, or standards of perfection not uniformly applied to institutionally produced scholarship. Criticism, where offered, must be proportionate, substantive, and directed toward the evidential or analytical claims of the work rather than the status of the researcher. Attempts to discredit this study on the basis of its independent or voluntary character, or to subject it to punitive scrutiny on that basis, are neither reasonable nor legitimate and are expressly repudiated here.

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
POST-RISING & THE 'TAN' WAR

In May 1916, the '*Donegal News*' reported how Countess Markievicz, who was among the most notable Easter Republican Rising prisoners taken in Dublin, had for some years been identified with "extreme Socialism." It was documented that she was a daughter of the late Sir Henry Gore-Booth, Bart., a large landowner of County Sligo, and sister of the-then prevailing baronet, she spent her early life on her father's estate, where she was renowned as an ardent horsewoman who knew all that was to be known about horses. It was documented that she drove a "four-in-hand as an expert, has ridden in hunt races, and has had more than the usual experiences that come to a woman of her rank. In due course she was presented at Court, spending several seasons in London." Later, it was reported she became an art student in Paris, achieving success as an exhibitor at the Salon. Nearly sixteen years earlier, she had married Count Casimir Markievicz, a Polish artist of distinction. Adding to this image, the paper noted that she had reportedly been seen driving a 'four-in-hand' in a big Suffragist demonstration in London.[44]

On the same date, the '*Strabane Chronicle*' reported that a large meeting of constitutional Irish nationalists had been assembled in the west of Scotland to condemn the Easter 1916 Rising. At the meeting, it was claimed that the Rising had been instigated by "Socialist and Sinn Féin elements that had always been hostile to the Irish Party."[45]

Over a week later, the '*Westmeath Examiner*' ran a scathing attack on the 1916 Easter Rising. The paper asserted that the grim sounds and horrible sights which the supposedly mad enterprise of Sinn Féin in its German-backed rebellion of Easter Week had forced upon Dublin and some other parts of Ireland had died away, and the nation was supposedly beginning to realise fully the horror and the devastation

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[44] *Donegal News 6/5/1916*

[45] *Strabane Chronicle 6/5/1916*

which it had caused. The '*Westmeath Examiner*' claimed that thousands of homes had been deprived of breadwinners, leaving old men, women, and children destitute, while young men - both insurgents and members of the military - lay dead or seriously wounded. Dublin, it asserted, had suffered immense destruction, with the city's once irreplaceable assets reduced to ruin. The paper described the Rising as "the mad folly of a handful of men acting in the dark," arguing that the devastation inflicted upon the capital illustrated the reckless nature of the insurrection. It elaborated that some of the young men had been influenced into allegedly acting irresponsibly and without its authority, and in concert with the "foreign enemies" against whom hundreds and thousands of the "best and bravest" of Irishmen had been laying down their lives for two years on the battlefields of Europe.

The paper continued by saying that, of the leaders and others associated with the revolt, a heavy toll had been exacted, and a number were awaiting their doom - some of them who could pay for offence against men - namely, the penalty of death. Others had been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The paper suggested that several participants, perhaps, had been sentenced to death for a time from the scene, but whatever the motives or the objects of different individuals - whether a "mad idealism, wicked design, or treacherous frenzy to wreak the worst possible Irish hatred upon their country and hand her over to the Huns of to-day" - those involved in the Rising had supposedly played the part of Ireland's "greatest enemies." The newspaper suggested that many of them, indeed, had been useful workers in the construction of the New Ireland which was to be round by Irishmen under Self-Government (Home Rule). The paper dismissively remarked that, had they devoted their brains, and their education, and their energies to "proper objects," they might, by their means (the only means and the best), have brought Ireland to the threshold of Freedom, they could have, doubtless, given good and welcome help in the building up of the new and woman of to-day, and the tribute and blessing of generations to come.

Yet, instead, the '*Westmeath Examiner*' claimed, they had chosen the role of the wrecker, the murderer, and "red" Socialistic destroyer, and had they all realised it or not, the treachery to Ireland. They had gone, but their wretched, awful work remained. The paper lamented what it described as "many a vacant chair by the hearth," portraying the Rising as having plunged families into despair. In highly charged language, it claimed that "black Havoc and Red Ruin" now loomed over the smoking ruins of one of the capital's most famous thoroughfares, presenting the rebellion as an act of nihilistic destruction rather than national renewal.

This newspaper claimed that this was some of the awful work, the awful result of the "Sinn Féin insurrection," arranged and prepared, as they now definitely knew, of "Government" declared by a "secret organisation," and leaning, for support, at least, of their notable allies - the German Empire (enemies of the United Kingdom in World War I). It asserted that one of the most melancholy features of the "whole wretched business" had been added to the chequered history of Ireland in the days when the dawn was at hand by the "mad and criminal folly of a small section of her sons, acting without her authority or knowledge, and seeking to betray her into the hands of her ancient enemy."

Clearly siding with the cause of constitutional nationalism, the '*Westmeath Examiner*' remarked that, yet, amidst all the horror, all the havoc, all the shock - came the voice of Ireland, the supposedly true voice of Ireland, the voice that had rung out so chosen Leader, Mr. John Redmond. "Home Rule is not destroyed by this stab in the back. The Home Rule Cause is indestructible!" - those words, it claimed, spoken in his place in Parliament, added, not by Englishmen nor by Unionists, but by Irishmen. Though Home Rule, the paper continued, and "the Book" would supposedly triumph, "despite enemies from within or from without"; and in the life of a self-governed Nation, the "bitterness and the shame and the memory of the mad and criminal folly of the insurrection of Easter Week might be forgotten." The '*Westmeath Examiner*' juxtaposed what it deemed the

righteous cause of constitutional nationalism with the supposed evils of the "red, Republican banner."[46]

As reported by the '*Leinster Leader*' on the same day, a meeting of the Dunshaughlin RDC (majority controlled by constitutional nationalists), referring to what had become known as the 'Battle of Ashbourne,' in reference to such "recent disturbances" the Chairman said it was evident that in that insurrection of Easter 1916 that there were many influences at work. He remarked that 'Larkinism' and socialism, which went hand in hand, were there, but there was also a German influence behind it. The occurrence, he remarked, had taken place at a most in-opportune time and in the opinion of a great many people, it would do no good to the cause of Ireland. He proposed:

> "*That we, the Dunshaughlin Rural District Council, hereby put on record our abhorrence of the recent rebellion in which many innocent and inoffensive lives were lost and we consider that the blame lies on those responsible for first allowing the arming and organisation of the Volunteers in the North of Ireland by Sir Edward Carson. We sympathise with Mr. Redmond in the grief which he must feel and we still feel the greatest confidence in him and his leadership*."[47]

As reported by the '*Belfast Newsletter*,' at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Irish Trades Union Congress during June 1916, the Chairman (Thomas Ryder Johnson) referred to the position of organised labour and Ireland at that moment in time, and remarked that, unfortunately, it was a very different scenario from what prevailed at their previous convening. His first duty was to express on behalf of the Executive Committee, and on behalf of the workers generally, their sincere regret for the loss of two prominent members - namely, James Connolly (IT&GWU leader) and

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[46] *Westmeath Examiner 13/5/1916*

[47] *Leinster Leader 13/5/1916*

Richard O'Carroll (the Dublin City Councillor), and to convey to their family and relatives their condolence in their bereavement, and he moved accordingly. The motion was seconded by Cork City Councillor Egan, and was passed in silence, those present standing. The Chairman next referred to two other members of the committee who were arrested and deported without trial, and also mentioned other trade unionists who were similarly treated. He thought a grant should be given to compensate those who suffered during the insurrection, and that the claims of the workers should be put at least on the same footing as those of the property owners. He felt that compensation for loss of life should also be provided. Johnson also submitted a letter, which he had forwarded to the Right Honourable Lloyd George, in regard to the ongoing negotiations which were afoot concerning a settlement of the Irish question. In regard to the trade unionists who were arrested during the Rising and subsequently in custody, a resolution that was passed unanimously, reiterating the demand that all trade unionists held in military custody in England should be immediately released or brought to trial, and requesting the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress to press this claim on the Government, "as we believe the continued detention of these men has for its object the crippling of the trade union movement in Ireland."[48]

In October 1916, the '*Sligo Champion*' reported that a detailed and sympathetic account of Roger Casement's mission in the Easter 1916 Rising by Ms. Eva Gore-Booth had been published in an edition of the '*Socialist Review*.' The feature sought to clarify the reasons for the Rising and portray it in a positive light. Gore-Booth's account pointed to the terrible slum conditions faced by many in Ireland, widespread dirt, misery and poverty, the epidemic of typhus in South Connemara, and the feeble dependence of the Irish people on "English philanthropic societies." She asked if it

[48] *Belfast Newsletter 14/6/1916*

was any wonder that such an economic state of affairs had "found an outlet in rebellion."[49]

On 20 May 1916, the '*Leitrim Observer*' reflected on how James Connolly became the last of the Proclamation signatories to be executed. It noted how he had been a leading figure in the Rising and referred to him as "the brains of the Syndicalist movement."[50]

According to the '*Kerryman*' in April 1917, many people of Republican sympathies in the town of Tralee, North Kerry, of whom Mr William Partridge, T.C. (Dublin City councillor), possessed a great number of friends - had read with genuine satisfaction of his release from Lewes Prison. That satisfaction, the paper observed, was clouded by the fact that his freedom had come only because his health had been gravely damaged. The '*Kerryman*' remarked that Mr Partridge (affiliated to the Irish Labour Party & Trades Union Congress) had never been physically strong and that his year of imprisonment appeared to have seriously weakened him. The newspaper expressed the hope that the worst effects of his confinement would be eased once he returned to his own home, where he might regain his strength. As the paper recalled, the City Councillor - well known to have been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for his role in the previous year's Dublin Easter Rebellion of 1916 - had served as Chief Lieutenant to the late James Connolly. In this role, he had often visited the town to assist with the organisation and training of Liberty Hall's leading revolutionary organisers. The '*Kerryman*' noted that his last visit had been on the Good Friday before the Rising, and that he would likely remember making his devotional "rounds" at the Dominican Church that evening. This, the paper said, called to mind a recent circular which had attempted to portray Count Plunkett as anti-clerical. To counter this, the '*Kerryman*' pointed to Partridge himself - one of the main figures associated with Liberty Hall, the centre of Irish

[49] *Sligo Champion 7/10/1916*

[50] *Leitrim Observer 20/5/1916*

Socialism - yet, in the newspaper's view, always a deeply religious man and one of the finest Catholics in the country. The paper added that the town had been little stirred on a Sunday morning when word spread that Irish Republican flags were flying in several parts of the district.[51]

At the close of April 1917, the '*Irish Independent*' referred to the "Irish Social Question" in reference to an updated edition of James Connolly's '*Labour in Irish History*.' According the the newspaper, "the motives which impelled James Connolly to engineer the hopeless insurrection in Dublin a year ago" could be gleaned in great measure from his two works on the Labour question in Ireland, published in one volume by Maunsel and Co. Mr. Robert Lynd, in providing the introductory chapter, appraised them from the culturally National and Socialistic viewpoints, and he accepted as the true interpretation of Connolly's mood and purpose in the "rash venture" his intolerable feeling of the triumph of "the husk-hearted Gentleman and the mud-hearted Bourgeois," and his desire "to wreck the great guilty Temple and give us rest." The '*Irish Independent*' opined that, with his undoubted strength of character and great organising capacity, James Connolly may have performed a "Herculean service" in the cause of Irish workers, had he otherwise utilised the "via media between the Liberal or Manchester school - and organised, aggressive Socialism." It opined that his creed was a fusion of the patriotism of Fintan Lalor and the Syndicalism of Karl Marx, and "he was prepared to carry out the teachings of the latter to the utmost." What a pity, the paper claimed, that when adopting a German model in sociology he did not follow the ideas of Windthorst, rather than those of Marx, and provided Irish workers the Volksverein approach "instead of the sympathetic strike."[52]

The '*Cork Examiner*,' reporting on the conference of the Irish Trades Union Congress in August 1917, outlined that Mr. Thomas McPartlin, president of the organisation,

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[51] *Kerryman 28/4/1917*

[52] *Irish Independent 30/4/1917*

remarked that he did not believe that Ulster actively sought partition in the future in Ireland. He believed that Ireland's frontier was fixed by nature, and they from the other end of Ireland were too fond of the North, with all its history and traditions, to acquiesce in any attempt prompted by interested Englishmen to keep them divided. The capitalist and employing classes, he claimed, were putting forth every effort to prevent Ireland enjoying the advantages of the Franchise Reform Bill. Even the Irish representatives in the Westminster Parliament, through their allegedly indifferent attitude, showed that they dreaded a democratic widening of the electoral franchise. Irish workers, he believed, would wish to see to it that the Bill was not like many other reforms secured for England and Scotland for years before applied to Ireland. It would be wrong, he asserted, to defer this to be settled by the Irish Parliament, for the advent of the Irish Parliament would be the signal for the real opening of a class war. All the workers' voting power would be necessary to grip their right proportion of the machinery of Government.[53]

In a hostile editorial published on 10 November 1917, the '*Evening Telegraph*' mocked Father R. Fullerton's defence of Sinn Féin, dismissing his explanations as incoherent and scurrilous. The paper derided Sinn Féin rhetoric as political theatre, sneering that it amounted to "sitting with your hat in your hand on the steps of Westminster pretending to beg for doles," while simultaneously accusing the movement of harbouring revolutionary ambitions it could not realise. The writer urged Father R. Fullerton, the allegedly self-proclaimed top-notch patriot, to explain this supposed fact: that the very essence of Sinn Féin had been to establish an assembly in Ireland depending absolutely on itself, with power to put its decrees in force yet no machinery to carry out its legislation. If this was not "ourselves alone," what was it?

Secondly, the paper claimed, the Irish Party in October 1892 had issued a programme of reforms which included a Catholic University, peasant proprietary, labourers' cottages,

[53] *Cork Examiner 7/8/1917*

extension of the franchise and of local government, and Home Rule. Every item on that programme, it claimed, had since been in some way realised. This was what this practical patriot called "pretending to beg for doles." Of course, the paper claimed sarcastically, it was nothing compared to the service Father Fullerton had rendered to Ireland, and to his then-recent support of an Irish Republic in the Greek Kalends (again, a sarcastic commentary). It noted that the '*Irishman*' made a mild protest against some remarks of the Socialist paper '*Revolution*.' The chickens, the '*Evening Telegraph*' claimed, were coming home. If it consulted Madame Markievicz, it found that Socialism had been James Connolly's political creed, and that Socialism had engineered the Easter Rising, and that Madame Markievicz had helped - and had done so as a Socialist.

It also ought to be noted that this very page shows the newspaper running an advert for the Irish Industrial Collecting Society, which urged individuals to obtain financial services through a firm based in Ireland rather than Great Britain. This shows that the '*Evening Telegraph*' was 'pro-Irish' in the sense of favouring the constitutional development of a capitalist economy in Ireland, rather than Great Britain, but regarded the body of the revolutionaries as harbouring a form of a destructive and anti-capitalist menace.[54]

On 17 November 1917, the '*Evening Telegraph*' again launched an attack on the Irish Republicans. It remarked that Madame Markievicz had recently stated that in 1916, James Connolly "forced the Socialists to accept the policy of Ireland a separate nation, and it was on that they founded their demand to have a Republic." The reply pointed out that the paper's contributor had long been waiting for an authoritative pronouncement like this. It linked up Sinn Fein with the Socialism which they claimed had been so rampant of late. It was not thought desirable to dip too deeply - at the prevailing moment at all events - into the aspects of that form of Socialism which enjoyed the approval of Madame

[54] *Evening Telegraph 10/11/1917*

Markievicz. It was sufficient, they claimed, to quote a few excerpts from the pamphlet "The New Evangel," composed by James Connolly. Dealing with religion, he had written that the supporters of Socialism were not necessarily Materialists in the "vulgar" and merely anti-theological sense of the term, but that they did not base their Socialism upon any interpretation of the language or meaning of Scripture, nor upon the real or supposed intentions of a benevolent Deity. The paper claimed that God was, therefore, left out of it. Further on, the paper noted that he had written:

> *"That if a given portion of Scripture is found to agree with Socialist doctrine, the scientific Socialist considers that the interpretation of that portion is stronger because of its identity with Socialism!"*

The reader was also invited to note the following significant and ominous sentence:

> *"But he (the Socialist) does not necessarily believe that Socialism is stronger or its position more impregnable because of its theological ally."*

In other words, the paper claimed, if the inspired Word of God agreed with Socialism, so much the better for God's Word. If it did not agree, then Scripture went by the board and Socialism remained supreme. No wonder he had refused, in conclusion, "to identify Socialism with religion," and had declared it based on facts, while religion was founded on the "occurrence in past ages of a series of phenomena inexplicable by any process of mere human reasoning." The '*Evening Telegraph*' noted that His Holiness the Pope was charged with issuing "ill-reasoned and inconclusive encyclicals" which had made the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church belated camp-followers in the armies marching under the banners raised by the "Agnostic exponents of the individualistic philosophy."

Towards the end, the paper noted that he had declared for a "Socialist republic," and the article went as far to claim that such a republic was anything but the dream of patriots; nor

did it conform to the ideals of those who loved Ireland. He had called Ireland "a combination of chemical elements." With him, it claimed, the call of the country fell on deaf ears, and the magic of faith and fatherland was a "meaningless shibboleth." It was this Socialist republic, the newspaper noted, that he and Madame Markievicz had "conspired to erect," and which they had "gulled the Catholic youth of Dublin into dying for." Was it not time, it asked, for Catholic Irishmen to pause and think? Was it for such an ideal that Sarsfield and O'Neill and O'Donnell had fought, and Owen Roe had died?

Continuing on the attack, the '*Evening Telegraph*' asked could anyone have reconciled the following statements of Mr. de Valera, culled from the same speech he had made at Waterford? Among those remarks were:

> "*Sinn Feiners are the genuine peacemakers*"; and
> "*The first thing we want is to get arms into our hands*."

Again, it was remarked that:

> "*Any settlement short of Ireland's complete claims will be repudiated*"; and
> "*There will be no necessity for the Convention if English statesmen gave Ireland Home Rule*."

The bird in the bush, the article claimed, was becoming elusive. It believed that the repeated assertions of Messrs. Griffith and Figgis, and other Sinn Fein leaders, about the Peace Conference had been blown sky-high, and of all quarters in the world, by John Devoy himself. As was supposedly well known, Mr. Griffith had been quite positive that Ireland would be admitted to the Conference, although he had allegedly never "condescended to give the slightest reason" for his confidence. Allegedly, it had been pointed out that none but belligerents could be admitted. Mr. Griffith, however, had gone airily on with his "parrot cry." Here were Devoy's words:

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

"Ireland cannot hope for representation at the Peace Congress, unless she becomes a belligerent; captures cities and towns, and establishes a Provisional Government."

It was time, the '*Evening Telegraph*' claimed, for Mr. Griffith to set to work to fulfil the qualification.

The newspaper documented that during the preceding week, the '*Irish Nation*' political magazine had made some noteworthy disclosures in reference to the Irish Volunteers, from which the following could be culled:

- That the Irish Citizen Army and James Larkin had supposedly been bitterly in conflict with the Irish Volunteers, and their official organ, the '*Irish Worker,*' had ridiculed its leaders.
- A scheme had been brought forward - with John MacNeill's approval - to hand over the Volunteers to the control of the British War Office.
- Mr. Griffith had been a Volunteer who drilled, but he had taken no active part in the organisation. He had neither assisted in defeating the War Office scheme nor participated in the Easter Rising.
- The Easter Rising had been planned in the organised workers' headquarters Liberty Hall, and the outbreak had allegedly been rushed not for national liberty, but because of a rumour that 200 leaders were about to be arrested.
- Certain men were supposedly assassinating their own Irish cause simply to preserve their personal influence. They were not the ones who had gone forth and died in Easter Week. They were the ones who secretly manipulated the wires, controlled the funds, and hatched plots to create an atmosphere that suited their schemes.

The '*Evening Telegraph*' claimed that, to constitutional nationalists, the foregoing had not been new, but coming as it did from the pen of an Irish Volunteer, it should have given the youth of Ireland food for serious thought. It remarked that the '*Irish Nation*' had also made a remarkable admission regarding the then-current Irish situation, namely:

> *"We need not hope for any European backing, and it is very doubtful if even His Holiness the Pope would favour the idea of complete separation from England and the British Empire . . . What nation is able to maintain the balance of power . . . England, with her powerful fleet, is the most likely to be chosen to maintain the equilibrium of Europe. This being so we ask: Will the nations of Europe agree to the dismemberment of the British Empire?"*

Yet, the '*Evening Telegraph*' noted, De Valera was still proclaiming that he would vanquish the British army and annihilate the British fleet - armed with ten-foot pikes.

It remarked that the '*Irishman*' was still going strong for '*Citizen*' and declared it was Republican phraseology, oblivious of the supposed fact that not a single republic in existence used the term, and none in the past ever did, except one, and that for only a space of scarcely a dozen years. The paper asked readers to note the following "gem of reasoning":

> *"If we can only say "Citizen" with our tongue in our cheek or in a half-ashamed way then our Republic is doomed!!"*

What a tender plant, the '*Evening Telegraph*' claimed, that Irish Republic must be. It also claimed that Mr. Arthur Griffith's Peace Conference idea was almost dead and damned, with that week's '*Irishman*' admitting:

> *"It is all very well to expect a hearing from the Peace Conference. But remember this, the rulers of Europe care nothing about any nation save their own. When the Socialists of Stockholm cast Ireland to the tender mercies of England, what can we expect from the oligarchs?"*

Quoting Asquith, the paper remarked, "we are getting on." The news outlet also noted that it continues: -

> *"America is a friend. Is she? What about Liam Mellows and Dr. McCartan? America is in the war, and her rulers and people are exhibiting an ugly side of their character."*

Precisely, the '*Evening Telegraph*' claimed - and for the first time, Sinn Féin had succeeded in getting that side turned towards Ireland. "Our gallant Allies in Europe", the paper remarked, had receded to the "dim and distant past," and Sinn Féin was beginning to recognise this. Now that revolutionary methods were being advocated by Mr. de Valera and his following, it was opined that it was well for Irishmen to look around the world and "see those methods in other lands."

For example, it noted that the Russian Revolution was only seven months old. It had promised liberties almost identical with those of the French Revolution, yet it had carried none of them out to date. Instead, the newspaper opined that disruption, misery and chaos had been the results, and the curse of continuous change and uncertainty prevailed. By that day all personal property had been declared forfeit. China had obtained a Republic, and it had allegedly proved a miserable failure; like the Russian, it too had become the victim of change. Mexico, which the '*Evening Telegraph*' referred to as "once prosperous and contented," had undergone another revolution, and Carranza reigned as a result. No sooner had this been achieved than Porfirio Gonzalez had commenced a counter-movement. The position of the Catholic Church in Mexico had been "simply awful," and "sacrilege and pillage" had gone on unceasingly. No wonder, the paper opined, that the Irish Bishops, in a recent circular, had warned their people that forms of government that were popular at that moment has been and still were associated with the worst kinds of tyranny and religious persecution.

Concluding, the '*Evening Telegraph*' remarked that it was high time Irishmen became alive to the "mad ideals" that were being placed before the hot-blooded youth of the

country - and that there was going to be a "terrible awakening" yet.[55]

Near the end of November 1917, the '*Derry Journal*' featured a contribution by Londonderry Corporation City Councillor, Patrick Meenan, who wrote to defend James Connolly against what he considered unjust and misleading criticism circulating in political and newspaper commentary. He argued that James Connolly had been consistently misrepresented - particularly by those who caricatured him as a fanatical socialist, an enemy of religion, or a man driven by destructive impulses rather than patriotism. Meenan insisted that Connolly's socialism must be understood alongside his deep love of Ireland, not against it. Far from being a mere agitator, Connolly had been a disciplined organiser who devoted his life to improving the condition of workers and to awakening national consciousness among ordinary people. His political writings and trade union activities had arisen from a sincere belief that Ireland could not be truly free unless its people, especially the labouring classes, were freed from exploitation and poverty. Meenan then turned to Connolly's rôle in the Easter Rising, presenting him as a man whose commitment only strengthened as danger increased. He described Connolly as someone who knew from long experience the costs of political struggle and who had accepted the Rising as a necessary, if tragic, act in the face of what he saw as British misrule. Meenan rejected suggestions that Connolly had been reckless or manipulated. Instead, he portrayed him as thoughtful, deliberate, and fully aware of the consequences. Even those who disagreed with Connolly's tactics, Meenan argued, should acknowledge the nobility of his motives and the courage of his final days. Connolly's calmness under fire and his refusal to renounce his ideals, despite knowing his death was certain, were presented as evidence of genuine heroism.

The piece criticised individuals - both within the nationalist movement and outside it - who had used Connolly's ideology to discredit the Rising or to cast suspicion on all who

[55] *Evening Telegraph 17/11/1917*

admired him. Meenan accused such people of exploiting public uncertainty to deliberately misrepresent Connolly's intentions, often for personal or political advantage. He especially objected to claims that Connolly's socialism made him inherently anti-religious or disloyal to Ireland, insisting instead that Connolly respected religious conviction and sought only justice for all classes. Meenan reminded readers that many respectable citizens, including some clergy and professionals, had valued Connolly as a principled and humane figure whose concerns extended far beyond party agendas. In closing, Meenan urged readers to judge Connolly by the breadth of his life's work, rather than by hostile interpretations of his final actions. James Connolly, he said, had been motivated by moral duty, national loyalty, and sympathy for the oppressed, not by a desire for violent upheaval. His death should have ended the attempts to tarnish him, yet detractors continued to revive old attacks. Meenan pleaded for a fairer, more generous remembrance - one that recognised James Connolly's sincerity, intellect, and sacrifice. The Rising had included men of many outlooks, he wrote, and Connolly's contribution should be honoured as part of Ireland's larger struggle for freedom rather than used as a weapon in political quarrels.[56]

An article in the '*Evening Telegraph*' from the turn of December 1917 outlined that a correspondent in the pro-Republican '*Irishman*' appeared so sore over the writer's criticisms of his Socialism that he descended to scurrility. Amusingly enough, it was claimed, he admitted that Socialists in Ireland were not committed to the full Socialist programme. Yet, he supposedly surrendered his whole case by adding the following:

> *"Even if they were, that would be less heinous than to support the status quo. The Socialist who would nationalise everything, and sweep away private property entirely, is by far a better Christian - a better Catholic - than the unctuous scoundrels who defend the present order."*

[56] *Derry Journal 21/11/1917*

The writer claimed that he now had the gentleman where he wanted him, and submitted that the correspondent had fully identified himself with James Connolly's Socialism, and that this Socialism was the mainspring of the Easter Week Rising. What was that Socialism? A few questions from James Connolly answered:

> *"Political opposition in the past, like the clerical opposition to Socialism at present, was and is an attempt to serve God and Mammon. ... Like the girl to the kisses of her sweetheart, the Church has ever been to the blandishments of the world - swearing she would ne'er consent, consented."*

Even the Vicar of Christ, the writer claimed, was not safe from insult. The reasoning employed by Leo XIII in his great Encyclical on labour was allegedly sneered at thus:

> *"If one of the boys at the National schools could not reason more logically than that, he would remain in the dunce's class all his schooldays."*

The Fathers of the Church were allegedly referred to as "madmen." Even the Apostles, the newspaper reported, did not escape:

> *"Their ideas of what was moral or immoral were fashioned for them by the social system in which they lived."*

That Socialist movement, the writer asserted, undermined religion in Dublin and opposed everything the Christian religion held dear. The Christian virtues were derided as "slave morals," and men were urged to unite against their enemies of the capitalist class and all who aided them - "scabs, bosses, police, magistrates and even ministers of religion" if they appeared favourable to the other side. Violence was praised and regarded as a virtue, and those who practised it and went to prison as a consequence were termed "soldiers of the working class."

That movement, he argued, permeated Dublin and captured extremists in Irish political life. It linked up the physical-force men with it. James Connolly, he insisted, was never a typical Irish Nationalist. Connolly, the writer claimed, had utilised the extreme Nationalist forces for Socialist ends, and Madame Markievicz assisted him. The dregs of that Socialism, in his view, remained, and the Irishman and its contributors were inoculated with the virus. And the Madame, he claimed, was once again at the forefront of the movement, still retaining all her revolutionary Socialist ideas. "Nationalist," he claimed, took second place. She had never repudiated Connolly's teaching, and he declared that she never would. This, he concluded, was his accusation, and the '*Irishman*' could now dissect it.[57]

In a February 1918 report by the '*Evening Telegraph*,' it was outlined how, at a meeting of the County Monaghan Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), lead by Mr. J. J. Turley, the view was expressed that the growing non-constitutional Republican movement was inferior to the constitutional Nationalists. It was claimed that the singing of "The Red Flag" indicated the spirit that moved the inner circle of Sinn Féin, the spirit of socialism in its worst form - the spirit indeed, it was claimed, that gave Sinn Féin life. Of course, it was sarcastically declared, that socialism must be all right when it was supported by infallible Sinn Féiners. The AOH said that there ought to be plain speaking on this subject, and the speaker also said that if the occurrences taking place in the country continued to be countenanced, and if the new movement drifted on in the way it was doing towards anarchy, the results would be deplorable - and responsible men who aided Sinn Féin would live to reproach themselves for failing to advise men against following the Sinn Féin movement.[58]

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[57] *Evening Telegraph 1/12/1917*

[58] *Evening Telegraph 18/2/1918*

In a feature by the same paper only a few days later, titled 'The Red Flag or the Green?' the writer declared that it would have been idle to minimise, and foolish to disguise, the gravity of the situation with which Ireland had been faced at that hour. Under the combined influences of "Sinn Feín-ism" and what the paper termed the "Castle military gang," Ireland, the writer asserted, had been rapidly drifting into anarchy. Forces had been let loose which republican leaders either had been unable or unwilling to control. New doctrines had been preached that struck at the root of social order. A spirit of lawlessness, the '*Evening Telegraph*' maintained - evidenced in what it referred to as the ruffianly raids for arms - had been encouraged, and might soon turn and rend the visionaries and dreamers whose rhetorical excursions had inflamed the minds of men supposedly unskilled in the subtleties of those spouters, and writers who were bellicose in times of peace and pacific in hours of war. The appearance of the "Red Flag Bolshevists" in the Mansion House, as the alleged "extreme Left" of Mr de Valera's forces, had been described by the writer as a sinister omen, full of grave foreboding for the Nationalist cause and for the country's future. It had compelled many, who had been toying with Sinn Féin-ism, to think furiously. The Marckieviczes, the Ginnells, and the international syndicalists had, the paper asserted, suddenly revealed the yawning chasm into which Sinn Féin lunacy had been leading the people. On the brink of this precipice, Ireland, the '*Evening Telegraph*' warned, had stood. The horror had been partially revealed, but the full horror of Sinn Féin error would not, the writer predicted, be apparent until it was too late for anything but condemnation. They, the republican leaders, had been as much in the toils as the leaders of the French Revolution when they had supposedly been rushed into rebellion by the 'Red Flaggers' of Liberty Hall.

The writer declared that if Sinn Féin had been unable to stand on its own feet without those elements - elements which the paper considered the predominant partners in the republican combine - then those who stood for the 'Green Flag' would have had to part from the absurd cause, rather than endure such loathsome associations. They would, the

'*Evening Telegraph*' insisted, have been under no obligation to cling to a sinking force.

The paper argued that public attention, now drawn powerfully and compellingly to this malignant manifestation of the Sinn Féin spirit, ought to have awakened many who had been led away by the Red Flag of international socialism. They had been led to believe, the writer stated, that the Red Flag had been supplanted or subdued, whereas it had, in fact, surrounded the De Valera standard in the Mansion House. The '*Evening Telegraph*' declared that the people of Ireland were not to be deceived by the "sham kind of freedom" proclaimed by every self-styled democratic revolutionary from '98 to Emmet. The Sinn Féin gathering had proclaimed, the paper recalled, that the Russian interpretation of freedom was the only interpretation acceptable to the people of Dublin. One speaker had announced that Dubliners were not going to be fooled by opportunists and asked whether they were prepared to follow the example of workers in other countries who had "done the same thing."

Still, yet another speaker - perhaps, the '*Evening Telegraph*' suggested, fearing that Ireland might repudiate a Bolshevist–Sinn Féin alliance - declared that some people were shy of acclaiming Russia because of the alleged terror there, but that he himself was "not afraid of the terror." Mr Ginnell, described by the writer as the author of the infamous "lie" about the Irish Party, had ended the meeting with a speech he claimed to be the most striking of the night, delivered, as he repeatedly insisted, "for a grand and noble purpose." The writer affirmed that the Nationalists of Catholic Ireland would decide for themselves whether to abandon the old Green Flag - hallowed by centuries of memories - and replace it with the Red. That, the paper stated, was the *Ultima Thule* of Sinn Féin republicanism.

The '*Evening Telegraph*' insisted it was time for Ireland to know clearly the character of the leaders of the new Sinn Féin departure, and where they stood regarding the Red Flag Bolshevism they had now taken to their bosom. The central

question, the writer argued, was whether Mr de Valera endorsed this doctrine - whether Mr John MacNeill or any other Sinn Féin leader did so. The matter, the paper declared, was too serious for cowardice, silence, or strategic evasion.

According to the writer, the Bolshevist party in Ireland claimed to be the true Sinn Féin of undiluted 'Sinn Féinism.' Their creed, the '*Evening Telegraph*' alleged, had resulted in wholehearted adherence to the political abolition of religion and in widespread dissolution of the marriage bond. The paper pointed to the thirty-five thousand appeals made in Petrograd as evidence of the "liberty" that Sinn Féin's new allies wished Ireland to welcome. The writer maintained that only one thing would save Ireland: clarity from Sinn Féin itself. The Sinn Féin leaders, the paper asserted, had gone too far to turn back. Having invoked the people to vote for Sinn Féin candidates, they were now obliged to tell Ireland what Sinn Féin really meant. It was, the '*Evening Telegraph*' insisted, their duty to declare whether the unclean spectacle exhibited in the Mansion House truly constituted the Sinn Féin creed of the new party. Any party that trafficked with or truckled to the 'Red Flag' element, the writer warned, was doomed. Those Sinn Féin leaders who possessed courage, the paper continued, must answer Mr Dillon's queries. If they refused, they would be guilty of cowardly hypocrisy. And if they did not answer clearly, the writer concluded, the men of the khaki - proud of the imperishable record of their race - would not haul down the Green Flag of Irish Freedom in order to raise the Red Flag of Bolshevism in its place.[59]

In a section called ''Banba' on Sinn Féin' from August 1918, the '*Evening Telegraph*' once again denounced the ideas of Sinn Féin, along with the increasingly revolutionary Labour Party, depicting them as two-sides of the same coin. It began by stating that Mr William X. O'Brien, President of the Irish Trades Congress and close associate of Madame Markievicz, had used his presidential address in Waterford to proclaim that James Connolly had left workers a "precious legacy," and that they would continue the struggle until a Workers'

[59] *Evening Telegraph 22/2/1918*

Republic had been established in Ireland. The writer noted that reports also claimed the "Red Flag" had been sung during the proceedings. The editorial insisted it was time for the Catholic workmen of Dublin and Ireland to reconsider their position.

The writer reminded readers that this was the same William X. O'Brien who had publicly professed support for the Bolshevik Republic, even predicting Ireland would soon follow the Bolshevik example. The article drew attention to the declaration of the United Labour Party of Russian Social Democrats, which had denounced Lenin and Trotsky as "associated with criminals" and accused them of suppressing political liberties. The editorial argued that this - together with the Bolsheviks' disestablishment of the Christian Church, confiscation of Church property, prohibition of religious instruction, and reduction of matrimony to a civil contract - revealed the true nature of the "Republic" O'Brien admired. The writer concluded that the Bolshevik use of the Red Flag established a clear link between Sinn Féin and Bolshevism, a link under which, the newspaper contended, atheism and irreligion sought shelter.

The article went on to assert that the Irish people must not forget the earlier agitation of Larkin and Connolly, whose teachings, it claimed, had conflicted with Catholic principles. The editorial recounted Connolly's statements challenging ecclesiastical authority, belittling papal encyclicals, treating the New Testament as outdated, and slighting priests who attempted to explain Catholic teaching. These remarks, the writer claimed, were used by socialist leaders to undermine the Church's moral authority. The newspaper invoked the words of Dominican clergy who had protested that while the pulpit was expected to fall silent, Liberty Hall was granted free rein. The editorial recalled the evening when a procession returning from the North Wall - where it had gone to prevent Catholic children being sent to Socialist homes in England under the supervision of Markievicz, Larkin, and Connolly - was allegedly hissed and booed by the Liberty Hall crowd. Only police intervention, the writer asserted,

prevented violence. This behaviour, it argued, resembled the anti-Catholic hostility of socialist crowds on the Continent.

According to the editorial, the Liberty Hall faction led by Connolly had precipitated the Easter Rising, thereby linking Ireland's cause with a socialism allegedly hostile to Catholicism. Although Connolly was dead, the newspaper said O'Brien and others now claimed his "precious legacy," seeking to make Connolly's doctrines prevail. It stated that Catholic and non-Catholic workmen alike must now decide whether they wished to stand with religion or with those who promulgated Connolly's teachings. The writer concluded that Easter Week had been a Socialist rather than a National rebellion, with Connolly, the socialist, practically in command. The editorial stressed that it was not opposing labour rights, declaring itself democratic and sympathetic to workers' struggles. But it vehemently rejected the suggestion that the Church had ever been hostile to labour. On the contrary, the writer argued that the Church had nurtured the worker through centuries of hardship, defended his rights, and remained the Church of the poor. Eminent Protestant historians, it noted, had called it the greatest democratic institution on earth, and even President Wilson had praised its democratic character.

The article therefore insisted that when the Church was ridiculed, when the Pope and bishops were insulted, and when priests were maligned - as it claimed Connolly's "New Evangel" had done - it was time for Catholics to call a halt. The editorial then compared Sinn Féin's trajectory to the beginnings of the French Revolution. It claimed that just as the Revolution's free-thinking origins had led to the expropriation of the Church and the establishment of atheistic worship, so too could Sinn Féin's doctrines lead Ireland towards irreligious excesses. The writer recalled the French de-Christianisation ceremonies in Notre Dame, arguing that this was the logical end of socialist influence if given uncontrolled power. It reminded readers that the Irish bishops in 1917 had warned Catholics that republican governments had often been accompanied by civil tyranny and religious persecution.

The disrespect for religious authority, the newspaper stated, was spreading through Sinn Féin circles. It cited the case of Father O'Flanagan's suspension, noting that Nationalist journals had stayed silent while Sinn Féin's '*Nationality*' had attacked the bishop. The editorial accused '*Nationality*' of misrepresentation, arguing that O'Flanagan had knowingly violated Maynooth regulations and incurred the proper penalty. The writer condemned '*Nationality's*' defence of parishioners who had padlocked their church and prevented Mass, calling the justification "a more outrageous defence" than any yet encountered. This, the editorial claimed, amounted to sacrilege cheered on by Sinn Féin's official organ. The writer warned that bishops too had rights, and that the bishop's authority could not be subject to mob judgement. It denounced '*Nationality*' for dragging a bishop's name into public controversy and insinuating that he acted at the behest of the British Government. The '*Evening Telegraph*' newspaper asked whether Irish Catholics were prepared to tolerate such conduct.

Turning to '*The Leader*,' the editorial accused it of political opportunism - "tight-rope dancing" - by flirting with Sinn Féin while hedging its constitutionalist position. The writer mocked '*The Leader's*' arguments about Ireland's prospects at the Peace Conference, questioning how Ireland could gain admission or who would represent her case. It challenged '*The Leader*' to substantiate its rhetoric rather than offering vague speculation framed by the conditional "if." Finally, the editorial published a mocking letter from a correspondent who suggested that if Sinn Féin expected support from foreign powers, it might look to Turkey and Bulgaria - nations which, the correspondent joked, had histories of betraying their benefactors. The editorial concluded wryly that it would not be impossible to imagine Irish Republicans cultivating such alliances, and asserted that Sinn Féin might find "the unspeakable Turk" more dependable than former allies.[60]

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[60] *Evening Telegraph 10/8/1918*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

In September 1918, a '*Roscommon Messenger*' writer stated in a full-frontal assault on the Republican movement that the full meaning and scope of the recent 'Bolshevist Charter' in Dublin had been made known during the previous week, and that it would have been both interesting and highly important for people in Ireland to examine some of its outstanding features. The writer reminded readers that at a meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin, on 4 February, this Bolshevist system had been highly commended to the people of Ireland - the workers and the other classes - by a heterogeneous assembly which had included several prominent Sinn Féin mouthpieces. One Sinn Féin organ, the editorialist recalled, had invited the people to put their money on the "Red Flag"; another had, with unconscious larkishness, played upon its blood-red symbolism. Though some members of Sinn Féin had since been oiled upon - even by their own followers - to repudiate this new brand of organised, sanguinary socialism, under which neither lives nor property nor the honour of the people could be safe for a single hour (as events in Russia had been daily proving), the writer noted that not one word of repudiation had come from any of them concerning Bolshevist rule or its methods. Consequently, the paper asserted, it had to be assumed that the party - or at least its working element - was committed to the "Red Flag" programme, bent on smashing up the socialisation movement that had secured certain benefits, or, at the very least, afraid to repudiate it. Owing to the avowed sympathy shown by Sinn Féin exponents at the Mansion House meeting for the Russian Bolshevist flag-bearers, and owing to their open offer of fellowship to Sinn Féinism, there had been, in the writer's view, no opportunity to disavow the subject. Bolshevism had grown willy-nilly into the Republican "rainbow-bashing" movement which had been foisted upon the Irish people for more than two years by a curious combination of Irish and alien influences - headed, the writer remarked, by such Irish names as Darragh Figgis, Eamon de Valera, and the stay-at-home fighters of the Arthur Griffith school.

If, therefore, the people of Ireland had been expected to swallow a dose of Bolshevism in their Sinn Féin pill at the

coming election, the '*Roscommon Messenger*' insisted that it would have been well for them to know what sort of ingredient had been recommended to them at the Mansion House. They had already tasted mild samples of its nature in the electioneering methods of Sinn Féin in various Irish constituencies over the preceding year and a half. But the full force of the policy - so enthusiastically and openly accepted, the writer argued, and accepted doubtless by the silence of assent among Sinn Féin's leaders - could only be gauged by looking closely at the features of the "Bolshevik Charter." Farmers, labourers, townspeople - indeed all classes in Ireland - could then, the editorialist wrote, draw their own conclusions as to how this particular brand of Irish "independence" might react upon their lives, their rights, their property, and everything they valued. Bolshevik rule, which paraded under that much-abused title "popular," had been, in the writer's view, the blankest tyranny the world had ever seen. The paper claimed that such tyranny was, no doubt, the logical expectation for Ireland also, should the people place themselves in the hands of a Sinn Féin party whose mouthpieces had acclaimed the Red Flag and whose Press had urged the Irish to "put their money on the Bolsheviks."

The Russian charter, the '*Roscommon Messenger*' explained, had proclaimed that private property in land was abrogated. The land had not been nationalised - because the peasants would not accept that - but had instead been handed over to the workers without compensation to the previous owners. All livestock and agricultural inventory on the confiscated estates had also been seized without compensation by what the writer derided as a so-called "popular" tyranny masquerading as honest democracy and Christian socialism. Private traders, commercial agents, monks, and clergy of all denominations were to be deprived of their vote and disfranchised, and a universal "conscription of workers" had been introduced. The reigning class, calling itself a "popular government," had reserved the right to disfranchise any body of workers or others, and to decide on the participation of trade unions and labour organisations in elections. Labour camps for the capitalist class, the editorialist noted, had been

established; those incarcerated there had no rights, and could expect to be answered only by the rifles of the Red Guards if they dared complain of liberties or justice.

The editorial claimed that all the so-called "democracy" and "proletarianism" of Bolshevism, when stripped of verbiage and judged from its bloody and rapacious record, stood revealed for what it was. The writer observed that the Bolshevists had even recently published attacks on Polish patriots because those patriots had placed Poland's national principle above the alleged pro-German terrorism of the Soviets. Enough, the paper stated, had been provided to give Irish people a sample of the Bolshevik ingredient in the Sinn Féin pill they were being asked to swallow at the forthcoming election.

"Good God!" the editorialist exclaimed rhetorically - were the Irish prepared to do so? If they were, then they must not complain of the consequences; they would be acting with their eyes open. The late Pope, known throughout the world as a friend and defender of Christian socialism, had stood for the rights of peoples of all races. And yet, the writer lamented, Ireland - the Island of Saints and Scholars - had, since the Mansion House meeting, seen Sinn Féin become the apologist for what the '*Roscommon Messenger*' described as one of the most atrocious examples of un-Christian, un-Godly, and un-Irish Bolshevism in modern history.

The Bolshevists, the editorial concluded, had been mouthed approval by Sinn Féin - whether through open endorsement or cowardly silence when repudiation had been demanded. Yet the people - the workers, farmers, labourers, and townspeople of Ireland - were now being asked to swallow the Sinn Féin pill with this allegedly destructive and abhorrent ingredient embedded within it. In many parts of the country, Sinn Féin's pill would no doubt be presented by persons wholly unaware of its poison. The danger of the moment, the writer warned, lay in the people failing to recognise the poisonous contents of the dose before it was too late. These ingredients were destructive of Ireland's best hopes and of the interests of all classes. Even if many

dangerous elements might momentarily be concealed, the one ingredient which meant Bolshevist devastation and the massacre of Irish liberty and nationality ought, the '*Roscommon Messenger*' insisted, to be enough. Ireland, the paper concluded, could scarcely be expected to swallow a pill containing such poison - even if its bolus had been gilded with tributes to republican gold.[61]

As reported by the '*Sligo Champion*,' on 7 December 1918, the Right Rev Mgr Innocent Ryan, P.P., V.G., Dean of Cashel, in a letter to the Press, claimed that he regretted to say that he was compelled to add that Sinn Féin had become an entity that was not only reckless and dangerous, but terrifying and unholy. Why? It was because, he asserted in the general election of that year, if not before, Sinn Féin was identified with Socialism, which he regarded as the pest and curse of modern society. Referring to a Sinn Féin hand-bill, Mgr Ryan went on to say that its chief paragraph contained "bait" for the working man, at which point he provided a James Connolly quote. The Dean of Cashel went on to remark that Socialism, pure and simple, was promised to the labourers if they voted for Sinn Féin. Socialism, which he claimed had been condemned by 6,000 years of world history; Socialism, which had been condemned again and again by the Church; Socialism, he claimed, which gave the "lie" to the Tenth Commandment of God. He asserted that this Socialistic doctrine had been sent down from the headquarters of Sinn Féin to "corrupt" his honest Catholic workmen. He repeated that the doctrine was unholy, and so was the cause that adopted it. He did not know Sinn Féin in that guise before. He was, he asserted, sure that none of their bishops or priests knew it. Hence he made bold to think that, theologically, he was at one with all the bishops of his country on that point.[62]

On 11 December 1918, the '*Freemans Journal*' reported that the Dean of Cashel was still seeking light on the authorship

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[61] *Roscommon Messenger 21/9/1918*

[62] *Sligo Champion 7/12/1918*

and authority of the Socialistic leaflet that had been distributed throughout East Tipperary in an effort to win votes for Sinn Féin. His condemnation of the leaflet was subsequently endorsed by Father Matthew Ryan, a member of the Sinn Féin Executive, who, at a meeting in Cashel on Sunday, stated that the Executive knew nothing about the leaflet and condemned everything in the nature of atheism, Bolshevism, and socialism, all of which had been condemned by the Pope.

Yet, the leaflet purported to have come from Sinn Féin "headquarters," although whether this referred to Killarney, the Dublin "headquarters," or the Carrick "headquarters" was disputed. It had been posted on the dead walls of Cashel by one of the Sinn Féin organisers, who also defended its contents. No repudiation was forthcoming from the party or the IRA, until the Dean of Cashel had decided to draw public attention to the invitation - purporting to be the official Sinn Féin invitation - urging electors to vote for an Irish Republic that "would vest in a free Irish nation all property rights as against the claim of the individual."

It had been suggested that the farmers and shopkeepers in Tipperary began to ask themselves whether this was the kind of freedom for which they were being asked to fight. It cast a new light upon an aspect of what claimed to be Sinn Féin and touched their livelihoods and homes directly. Hence the desire emerged to shift responsibility from Harcourt Street to Carrick-on-Suir and to disown James Connolly's gospel. Apparently, there was now a tentative promise that the Sinn Féin Executive would be invited at its next meeting to repudiate and condemn the offending leaflet. Observers awaited with interest the response that would be given to such an invitation.

However, the newspaper editorial opined that, in truth, the repudiations being made in Tipperary were altogether belated. There was more than the leaflet to repudiate, should the Executive find the courage. Father Matthew Ryan might have denounced Bolshevism, but Madame Markievicz - titles having been abolished by the Bolsheviks - was the Sinn Féin

candidate for the St Patrick's Division of Dublin. She openly extolled the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution, regarding that Revolution as a model. She was not the only candidate who regarded James Connolly as the true precursor of the Republic. The Mansion House meeting held in celebration of the Revolution demonstrated how Sinn Féin's Labour allies, claiming to be the official Labour Party, regarded Bolshevism, its works, and its pomps. The errant leaflet, in fact, condensed the essence of the programme formally adopted at the Waterford Labour Congress, where Mr William X. O'Brien - who allegedly made no secret of his opinions about either Bolshevism or socialism - was elected Secretary. The Labour Party was to withdraw its candidates in the election to leave a clear field for Sinn Féin, but under cover of the Sinn Féin flag it was steadily pursuing its own propaganda. Although the electoral profits, for the moment, were accruing to Sinn Féin, the propaganda itself was flourishing.

The newspaper also pointed out that, without the organised forces of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union in several constituencies, Sinn Féin candidates would have had little hope of success. The leading members of that Union were ardent believers in the very principles condemned by the Dean of Cashel and Father Matthew Ryan. Even such a polite organ of Sinn Féin as '*New Ireland*' - the editor of which was the Sinn Féin candidate for Rathmines, and one of the directors of which was said to be the Sinn Féin director of elections - advised its readers, in the aftermath of Brest-Litovsk, to place their money and their hopes on the Bolsheviks, at least as national liberators. The newspaper quipped that whether Lenin and Trotsky had since forfeited the confidence of '*New Ireland*,' as so many other leaders had done, was not observed. But, what it referred to as the cult of Bolshevist diplomacy, if not of Bolshevist ethics, had been widespread among orthodox Sinn Féiners not long before.

Therefore, when the Sinn Féin Executive was called upon to condemn the indicted leaflet, sharp controversy was certain to arise. Any proposal to repudiate James Connolly, Madame

Markievicz, and the men of the Citizen Army - without whom there would have been no Easter Week to celebrate - was bound to provoke an interesting debate and division. It was unsurprising, then, that the proposal was postponed until after the election; but, it asserted, it would indeed be surprising if the Executive expressed any firm opinion about Bolshevism or socialism, or broke its alliance with Madame Markievicz and the Citizen Army. It would likely agree to disagree on questions of economics and religion, and was as unlikely to condemn James Connolly as it was to agree unanimously with Father Matthew Ryan on the teaching authority of the Pope.

The editorial opined that the simple truth was that the Irish Republican movement - like every Republican movement ever planned, save that of the Americans - contained various types of idealists, with its right wing and its left wing, its Malonys, its Kerenskys, and its Trotskys. No doubt Ireland's own bourgeois Republicans believed themselves firmly in the saddle, confident they could regulate the economy of the Republic, should they obtain it, according to the highest ethical standards. But those who had travelled the country knew that, with or without their connivance, quite a different gospel was being preached. The Bolshevist example was being commended to landless labourers and to occupiers of uneconomic holdings, because the land of Russia after the Revolution had been distributed free to the peasants, and had not even been socialised or nationalised for State purposes. By this appeal thousands of votes were being gathered for the visionary Republic.

The editorial opined that it was because the Dean of Cashel had supposedly opened the eyes of the farmers and peasant owners of Tipperary to the Republican propaganda that had stirred these longings, and awakened them to the supposed menace contained therein, that his reverence had provoked such a storm of obloquy. The Tipperary farmer, it was claimed, was not a sheep to lie down to be fleeced and carved without resistance. Unlike farmers in several other counties, he had taken action, organised his forces, and was preparing to give an account of himself, even within the brief

time available. He was setting an example that would be widely followed once the full strength of the movement - of which the condemned leaflet was the gospel - was revealed behind the allegedly glittering soap-bubbles of Sinn Féin sentimentalists.[63]

The '*Roscommon Messenger*' reported on 14 December 1918 that Rev Charles (Canon) Quinn, P.P., V.F., Lisdoonvarna, wrote that the Dean of Cashel, in the issue of the Freeman's Journal of the 4th, made a strong theological statement to the effect that he went to Clonmel to denounce Sinn Féin, simply and solely as it had shown itself in his own parish of Cashel, and for the first time in its history, as far as he knew it, as the ally and teacher of Socialism. This was the only point in which he was interested. For this reason, and this only, he styled Sinn Féin "Unholy." He believed Socialism was unholy, as it had been condemned by the Church. How could, he asked, Sinn Féin excuse itself when it taught Socialism publicly and unblushingly? Here, he claimed, was the heart of the Sinn Féin election hand-bill passed among the workmen of Cashel.

> *"HEARKEN TO THE WORDS OF JAMES CONNOLLY,*
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> *the greatest Labour leader Ireland had known. The cause of Labour was the cause of Ireland. Labour sought to vest in a free Irish nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual."*

He asked whether they stood by this teaching - yes or no. If yes, he was condemned by the Church; if no, he or his party was deceiving the people. Rev Quinn agreed with the Dean of Cashel that the then Sinn Féin policy was unholy and, in his judgment, contrary to the Divine and Natural Law relating to property and the goods of this earth. The priests of Ireland and the Catholics of Ireland, he said, should have been instructed by their bishops on this truly vital theological question involving their eternal and temporal interests. The

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[63] *Freemans Journal 11/12/1918*

doctrine of the Dublin Socialists, preached over Ireland, might, he warned, have led Ireland - the Isle of Saints and Scholars - to irreligion, chaos, and ruin in the near future. He, an aged priest of 85, humbly appealed to the bishops of Ireland for an authoritative pronouncement on this vital theological question, brought to the forefront in that grave crisis in Ireland's history by the Dean of Cashel.[64]

As noted by Shaun Doherty, it was highly ironic that the original Sinn Féin ("Ourselves Alone") party ended up inheriting the political legacy of the Easter Rising. Its founder, Arthur Griffith, had no role in the Rising and even advised the Irish Volunteers to follow Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order, which sought to call it off. Griffith was essentially pro-capitalist and envisioned Ireland developing its own empire; he even proposed a dual monarchy with Great Britain, rather than dismantling it. Sinn Féin inherited the political mantle largely because neither Connolly nor Pearse had established an independent political framework capable of translating the spirit and aims of the declaration of independence, proclaimed from the GPO steps on Easter Monday, into an enduring organisation. Sinn Féin was a primary target of British propaganda and became the main vehicle for political organisation. At its October 1917 convention, Mr. Éamon De Valera, a prominent Rising participant, replaced Griffith and later also took command of the Irish Volunteers, bringing both the political and military wings of the movement under his leadership. He emphasised national unity across social classes and discouraged debate over the precise nature of the Ireland they were seeking until a later time. Confining the stance to a primarily culturally nationalist frame had drawn many former supporters of Redmond's weakened Irish Parliamentary Party, along with prominent establishment figures and even the Catholic hierarchy. De Valera summarised his priorities: labour should organise independently, but the immediate focus had to be Irish liberty to govern, leaving social and labour issues for later. Efforts to create a parallel state within Ireland faced insurmountable obstacles, as Great Britain still controlled

[64] *Roscommon Messenger 14/12/1918*

taxation and government institutions despite popular support. This deadlock inevitably led to armed conflict, and the IRA launched a campaign against British forces. However, these political developments did not align with the interests of urban workers and agricultural labourers, who viewed the independence struggle as a chance to also press for improvements in pay, working conditions, and broader social issues. Doherty points out that the social agitation enabled by the conflict history has largely been suppressed. While the War of Independence was unfolding, remarkable social developments were taking place alongside the fight for national freedom. He points out that, for example, in February 1918, around 10,000 people attended a rally celebrating the Russian Revolution, welcoming its arrival with enthusiasm. The term "soviet" entered common usage, remarkable in a deeply Catholic country where the senior clergymen had heavily denounced such ideas. At the same time, there was a vigorous campaign for land redistribution from large estate owners to smaller farmers, and landless labourers mobilised, sometimes clashing violently with the police. By 1922, union membership had risen from 100,000 to 225,000, and workers staged occasional localised strikes and occupations during the conflict to demand better wages and conditions.[65]

Meanwhile, in the north-east, Austen Morgan notes in '*Labour and Partition: the Belfast Working Class, 1905-1923*' (Pluto Press) that Edward Carson's fears of working-class action were confirmed in January and February 1919 during the strike by engineering and ship-yard workers for a 44-hour week. The strike arose from the sacrifices made by workers during World War I and was prompted by the brief post-war economic boom. Although the Belfast strike coincided with one in Glasgow, working-class militancy across the United Kingdom was not coordinated. By the end of the war, Belfast had little sectarian tension, yet the city was also unreceptive to revolutionary socialists from Clydeside. This is perhaps

[65] *Doherty, S (2016). "All changed, changed utterly" - The Historical Significance of the Irish Revolution. International Socialism.* marxists.org

because revolution in Ireland had also carried a distinct culturally national dimension, which constrained the actions of Loyalist workers. Any serious challenge to State authority in Belfast had only risked benefiting the IRA. For Orange-affiliated workers in Belfast, Republicanism seemed to offer Ulster little beyond nationality and religion - both of which held little appeal for many Protestant workers who still saw themselves as British. The 1919 strike was the largest in Irish history, nearly encompassing all of Belfast. It demonstrated the remarkable unity of the trade-union movement, strengthened during the war, though its aims remained largely industrial, and its leaders were limited by collective-bargaining structures. The determination of Belfast workers was driven less by a desire to assert proletarian control over capitalism than by a demand for their fair share of industrial rewards. When the army intervened to maintain municipal services, the strike committee chose not to confront state repression. In 1919, the Belfast trade-union movement deliberately avoided political engagement, whether along ethnic lines or through industrial militancy. Nevertheless, the strike had helped consolidate socialist leadership in the city, with the May Day march that year becoming one of Belfast's largest in history. There had existed overlap between trade unionists and members of Sinn Féin and the IRA, but the labour leadership, mostly based in Dublin, was willing to follow the direction of the republican command. In April, the trades council led a general strike in Limerick against British militarism. This was more a locally focused protest than a class-based action and ultimately aided the IRA. ILP-TUC president, Tom Johnson, visited the city, yet the national executive struggled to raise enough funds to sustain the effort. No attempt was made to push forward workers' demands, nor to challenge the republicans' strategy. From 1919, the labour leadership engaged in what was essentially a selfless political gesture, shaped by limited ambitions and an inability to lead a trade-union movement that had grown across Ireland due to the war-time economy. The ILP-TUC was already dominated by the main beneficiary, the

IT&GWU - Ireland's largest general union that leveraged James Connolly's complex legacy.[66]

As documented by the '*Irish Independent*' in June 1919, in his pamphlet, "The Significance of Sinn Féin," Captain White (the anarcho-syndicalist of Irish Citizen Army fame) dealt with the position of Ireland on the global stage. He had much advice to tender as to the future working of the movement. However, the reviewer of his pamphlet declared that, if he meant to suggest that "Ireland should join one of the hostile camps into which he tells us that England is separating at present," very few in Ireland would likely consider his advice as being worth much. On the topic of the conscription crisis, the reviewer opined that the Labour and Socialist people of England from whom he would lead us to expect a great deal, seemed to be hiding their light under a bushel when Ireland's name was mentioned. Nor could it be said that, the reviewer asserted, in dealing with recent happenings, Captain White's paper struck the correct note. The labour leaders in Dublin, the paper claimed, knew well the relation that labour bore to the National movement, and the republican leaders likewise knew the great services which James Connolly had rendered in the bringing-about of the republican renaissance in 1916, noting that there was a mutual trustfulness. The reviewer opined that it didn't serve matters to state that the Labour-based Irish Citizen Army was the driving force of the Easter Rising, and that the menace of conscription was defeated by a strike of Irish Labour. No friend of Ireland, they claimed, would belittle the great part that labour played on both occasions, but at such a statement as Captain White's, in the reviewer's opinion, many would be sorely tempted to cry out, "Save us from our friends." The article claimed that one would "expect that kind of assertion from the hive of statesmen in Frederick street," which supposedly produced the very statesman who said that the Rising was due to solely economic causes. The review

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[66] *Morgan, A (1991). 'Labour and Partition: The Belfast Working Class, 1905-1923.' Pluto Press.*

concludes by stating that "the psychology of Sinn Féin as dealt with in the book seems at the least to be fanciful."[67]

As noted in a history feature by University College Cork (UCC), Cork republicans relied on organised workers, particularly the more radical Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (IT&GWU). The Cork Harbour dock workers' refusal to offload British military materiel in the summer of 1920 significantly intensified the national 'munitions strike' including dockers and railway workers. The Cork IT&GWU and the Cork Trades Council orchestrated one-day general strikes against conscription in April 1918 and advocating for the release of the Mountjoy hunger strikers in April 1920, as well as work stoppages in protest of the deaths of Lord Mayor Tomás MacCurtain in March 1920 and Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney in October 1920. During the 1920 local elections, a joint-ticket from Sinn Féin and the IT&GWU secured a majority of the Cork Corporation seats; during periods of urban crises, the IT&GWU and the Cork Trades Council often allied with republicans, particularly during the torching of Cork city centre. Organised labour continued to be a significant republican ally across County Cork in 1921.[68]

A commentary in the '*Belfast Newsletter*,' from March 1920 titled the 'Red Terror and Green' argued that Sinn Féin and the Irish revolutionary movement were becoming ever-increasingly entangled with international communism, particularly Bolshevism, and that this connection posed a serious danger not only to Britain but to Ireland itself. The writer insisted that Sinn Féin's actions, alliances, and ideological inheritance showed their plans to run Ireland inspired by the Russian Soviet system. Central to this claim was the influence of James Connolly, portrayed as the ideological bridge between Irish cultural nationalism and

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[67] *Irish Independent 30/6/1919*

[68] *'The Irish Revolution Project: The War of Independence in Cork and Kerry.' University College Cork https://www.ucc.ie/en/theirishrevolution/collections/mapping-the-irish-revolution/the-war-of-independence-in-cork-and-kerry/*

revolutionary socialism. The article began by asserting that Sinn Féin's rise could not be understood purely as a culturally nationalist phenomenon. Instead, it argued that the movement had absorbed much of its revolutionary spirit from continental socialist and Bolshevik thought, especially after the Russian Revolution. The newspaper maintained that Sinn Féin's methods and willingness to use violence closely mirrored those of revolutionary socialist movements elsewhere in Europe. According to the article, this resemblance was not accidental, but reflected clear links.

James Connolly was presented as the key figure in this transmission of ideas. The commentary acknowledged Connolly's role as a leader of the Easter Rising but framed him primarily as a committed Marxist revolutionary rather than as a cultural nationalist patriot. The author believed that Connolly's belief system had been absorbed into the revolutionary mindset of Sinn Féin and the IRA. Sinn Féin was accused of tolerating - and even encouraging - communist organisers, socialist propaganda, and labour militancy, especially when these destabilised British Crown authority. It was suggested that Sinn Féin's leadership understood that social unrest and economic disruption could weaken the existing order and thus advance their political cause.

Challenges to employers were described as echoes of Bolshevik strategy, designed to undermine respect for law, property, and constitutional authority. The commentary had also highlighted Sinn Féin's various alleged international connections, especially attempts to establish relations with Soviet Russia. These contacts were presented as evidence that Sinn Féin leaders saw Ireland as part of a global revolutionary struggle, rather than as a nation pursuing solely parliamentary independence. The newspaper argued that any willingness to cooperate with Moscow revealed a shared hostility to liberal democracy and conventional parliamentary government. The author maintained that accepting Bolshevik assistance or recognition inevitably carried ideological consequences.

A recurring theme was the supposed danger posed to religion and social order. The article warned that communism, once established, was inherently hostile to Catholicism and society. The newspaper also drew attention to the IRA's use of violence, arguing that its tactics resembled those of revolutionary militias. It claimed that a parliament set up by Sinn Féin would be of a Bolshevist nature. It was further claimed that the revolutionary section of organised labour in Britain preferred to see the establishment of an Irish Republic.

In its later sections, the commentary turned to British politics, warning that complacency or sympathy toward Sinn Féin within Great Britain itself risked enabling revolutionary contagion elsewhere. Sinn Féin, allegedly shaped by James Connolly's legacy and supposedly emboldened by Bolshevik success abroad, was portrayed as standing on the side of chaos, rather than order. The correlation with IRA attacks and workers' unrest in Great Britain were seen as too close to be simply coincidental.

The newspaper warned that if Sinn Féin succeeded, Ireland would threaten both British stability and Ireland's own social fabric.[69]

In May 1920, a '*Connacht Tribune*' editorial described the most interesting and important discussions at the Farmers' Union Congress held in County Galway - those which took place behind closed doors. For instance, it was decided to constitute the farmers' organisation as a trades' union. This would give it all the powers of a full legal body and actions that might otherwise be irregular. Colonel O'Callaghan-Westropp, in one of the most interesting speeches of the Congress, referred stimulatingly to the fact that not one in five Irish farmers were organised. The paper presumed that the organised farmers took steps to secure the loyalty of every member of their class, and also hoped that this thoroughgoing organisation would not result in *yet another class war* in the country, that the farmers made clear during

[69] *Belfast Newsletter 3/3/1920*

their Congress. Agriculture, they were truly told, "carries all Ireland on its back." The farmers were also noted as "the largest class in the same community." However, it was argued that they had not the same facilities for organisation as town workers, who resorted to clubs and discussed their own interests there, once the day's toil was over.[70]

A 2006 edition of '*An Phoblacht*' highlights that, in May 1920, during the 'Tan War,' the IT&GWU initiated a strike against the British military occupation, with railway workers and dockers refusing to manage war materials or transport British army personnel. By August of that year, 1,500 personnel had been terminated during this strike effort, which was set to last until the year's conclusion.[71]

In June 1920, a '*Kerry Weekly*' editorial argued that English press agencies had deliberately amplified reports of farmers organising a "defence force" to protect their interests and "fight labour." It accused the English media of promoting the scheme not to improve conditions in Ireland, but to deepen the division between farmers and labourers. The paper warned that some members of the Farmers' Union might not have realised how disastrous a serious conflict between farmers and workers would prove. It pointed out that certain individuals, both at home and abroad, actively wanted a class war that would split the Irish nation. Any support for aggressive tactics, the editorial stressed, only aided Ireland's enemies. Farmers, it insisted, needed representatives who were unquestionably sound on the national question. If such men were chosen, no one needed to fear that they would take steps that might fracture national unity. The '*Kerry Weekly*' concluded that farmers were entitled to their own organisation, provided it selected intelligent, far-sighted leaders willing to meet calm and reasonable labour representatives in conference. Such talks, it maintained, would resolve differences far more quickly and successfully

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[70] *Connacht Tribune 22/5/1920*

[71] *Moran, J (2006). '1916 - 2006: The labour movement, the Irish Citizen Army and the Rising.' An Phoblacht.*

than wrangling or confrontation, which could only end in disaster and bring disgrace on everyone involved.[72]

In October 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' published a detailed account of Cork Corporation's inquiry into the city's cost of living. The investigation was presented as both a practical measure to improve labour conditions and a milestone in Irish social research. The article hailed the inquiry as pioneering, urging other municipal authorities across Ireland to emulate it. Cork's effort was situated within a tradition of radical social inquiry in the city, linked to figures like Father O'Flynn and Terence MacSwiney, whose earlier writings had influenced the reorganisation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in 1917–18. The Commission conducting the inquiry was established by the Sinn Féin–IT&GWU–controlled Cork Corporation to determine a fair wage and acceptable living standard for municipal employees. Cork Corporation, led by Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney, was depicted not merely as a local authority but as a republican body functioning under British military occupation. The article highlighted that MacSwiney, imprisoned in Brixton Jail at the time, participated in the inquiry, framing the investigation as both a social and political act.

The Commission aimed to calculate, in concrete financial terms, the minimum standard of living for a working-class family in Cork, moving beyond bare subsistence to a level that allowed life "in human conditions." It identified four essential elements of working-class expenditure: a basic maintenance diet, additional food to meet the extra caloric needs of manual labour, allowances for household necessities such as clothing, rent, fuel, and lighting, and a further allowance for incidental personal expenses, including education, church dues, and modest personal items. Using these categories, it constructed a weekly budget for a five-person household, with food as the largest component. Including household necessities and personal expenses, the total minimum weekly income was calculated at seventy

[72] *Kerry Weekly 5/6/1920*

shillings (three pounds ten shillings), which the Commission deemed necessary to sustain a working man, his wife, and children in 1920 Cork City.

The inquiry emphasised its methodological rigour, claiming to proceed without bias and following recognised economic methods. Its approach was modelled on the English Board of Trade's 1914 cost-of-living inquiry but adapted for Irish conditions. Rather than relying solely on British statistics, the Commission collected detailed family budgets from workers across Cork, comparing them with Public Board dietaries and accepted nutritional standards. Data collection was carried out by voluntary investigators, including trade unionists and clergy, with no paid staff. Food expenditure was particularly measurable, with retail prices cross-checked against official records, revealing consistency with actual consumption patterns. Estimating the cost of clothing and footwear was more complex due to irregular purchases. Instead of household estimates, the Commission compared pre- and post-war prices and quality, noting dramatic price increases and declining durability. For example, boots costing fourteen shillings before the war now cost around forty-two shillings but were of poorer quality. Similar trends were observed in textiles. While these findings raised broader economic issues, the Commission focused on their impact on living costs.

Ultimately, the Commission concluded that seventy shillings per week represented the minimum income required for a working-class family in Cork, stressing that the figure should adjust with retail prices. Adjustments should be made by the Commission or a similar body, rather than arbitrarily, linking workers' living standards to the wider economy. An addendum by Professor Wibberley highlighted structural factors driving high living costs, noting limited arable land and a decline in crop cultivation between 1918 and 1919, arguing that long-term improvements required expanded tillage and greater rural labour efforts.

Presented in '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*,' the Republican-led Cork City cost-of-living inquiry combined

municipal social science with political purpose. It asserted workers' right to a dignified standard of living, challenged conventional assumptions about wages and prices, and had demonstrated how the machinery of local government, such as city corporations, even under revolutionary conditions, could be mobilised to advance labour and social reform.[73]

It was during his time in Brixton Prison during 1920 that Terence MacSwiney (MP for Mid-Cork, Lord Mayor of Cork, and O.C of the renowned First Cork Brigade) completed his essays that would later become renowned as '*The Principles of Freedom*.' In the text, during a critique of a book called '*The Great Illusion*' by Norman Angell, he would remark that:

> "*These points emerge: the basis of morality is self-interest; the Great Powers have nothing to gain by destroying one another, they should agree to police and exploit the territory of the "backward races"; if the statesmen take a different view from the financiers, the financiers can bring pressure to bear on the statesmen by their international organisation; the capitalist has no country. Well, our comment is, the patriot has a country, and when he wakens to the new danger, he may spoil the capitalist dream, and this book of Mr. Angell's may in a sense other than that the author intended be appropriately named 'The Great Illusion."*"

In the same section, he would also remark that:

> "*Comment is needless. The reading and re-reading of this book forces the conclusion as to its sinister design. Once that design is exposed its danger recedes. There is one at least of the "backward races" that may not be sufficiently alive to self-interest, but may for all that upset the capitalist table and scatter the deal by what Ruskin described*

[73] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 2/10/1920*

in another context as "the inconvenience of the reappearance of a soul."

Furthermore, speaking what he saw as a superficial conflict between Catholics, Protestants, and those of no religion, he underscored the key priorities in an economic frame:

> "*There is, of course, the better side, the many thousands of Catholics and Protestants who sincerely aim at better things. But what has to be admitted is that most sincerely religious people adopt to the man of no established religion the same attitude as does the hypocrite: they join in the general cry. They should look to their own houses; they should purge the temple of the money-lender and the knave; they should see that their field gives good harvest; they should remember that not to the atheist only but to the orthodox was it written: 'Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.'"*[74]

In November 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' published a sad but defiant report on the central London funeral of the Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, elected on the Sinn Féin-Irish Transport & General Workers' Union slate. It declared that:

> *"Terence MacSwiney's was the first Republican funeral that ever passed through the very centre of world imperialism and world capitalism."*

The news update had presented the funeral cortege of the martyred Terence MacSwiney as the first to defy Imperial capitalism in such an impactful way.[75]

In an edition published not long later, '*The Watchword of Labour*' outlined that the Cork City Branch of the Irish

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[74] *MacSwiney, T (1920). 'The Principles of Freedom.' Latest edition re-published by Mercier Press in 2020.*

[75] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 6/11/1920*

Transport & General Workers' Union had presented a humbly beautiful wreath, adorned with the Republican and Workers' flags, used in the funeral of Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney, who was viewed as "a sincere friend of the union." The wreath was brought in procession by four schoolboys from local Christian Brothers' schools, and it possessed the following inscription:

> "**From Cork Branch IT&GWU to their Dead Lord Mayor**
>
> *We who saw Connolly fall and watch the fruit,*
> *He nourished growing richer for his blood,*
> *Know this sad sacrifice too will yet recruit,*
> *And against material vanities quick will flood;*
> *The brave young hearts who follow in the truth,*
> *That sacrifice alone will yet attain,*
> *The goal for which Tomás and Terry died;*
> *And Irish workers seeking not self gain,*
> *Will follow in their footsteps and in their pride,*
> *Beidh Éire fós ag cáit ni duibhir*."[76]

It is worthwhile to point out that Terence MacSwiney was also friendly with the sisters Sheila and Nora Wallace. The sisters, who were shopkeepers at 13 Brunswick St. (later 4 Augustine St. They were involved in running a branch of the Irish Citizen's Army in Cork City. This branch would later become absorbed into the IRA. In January 1916, James Connolly visited the Wallace sisters on his journey to Co. Cork, subsequently discussing paramilitary strategies in a meeting hosted by Tadhg Barry. Their shop was a hive of Republican activity, and one of the last activities of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomás MacCurtain, was to visit the Wallace store late on the night of Friday, March 19, 1920. Florence O'Donoghue, the former chief of intelligence in the I.R.A, subsequently stated that Tomás departed the store with the newly elected Alderman, Tadhg Barry, about 11:00 pm that night on what would be his last voyage. A few hours later, the Lord Mayor of Cork was assassinated in his bed by the

[76] *The Watchword of Labour 13/11/1920*

Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C) in the family rooms above his business at 40 Thomas Davis Street in Blackpool.

There is a family account how MacCurtain's successor as the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who was also a regular caller to the Wallace's shop, went behind the counter and even sold a newspaper and a packet of cigarettes to a customer shortly before his arrest in August 1920. The Wallace sisters were busy at the particular time, taking dispatches around the city. Muriel MacSwiney, his wife, in her December 1951 deposition to the Bureau of Military History mentions how early on she became aware of "a little newspaper shop kept by the Misses Wallace, who were later connected to The Citizen Army". Sheila and Nora both worked in the shop and lived overhead at the time and the room to the rear of the shop was regularly used for Irish Volunteer and I.R.A. Brigade meetings. Sheila held the formal rank of Staff Officer as Brigade Communications officer.

They had established a youth and women's Citizen Army in Cork that lasted until 1921 and participated in local parades associated with the labour movement at that time. The notable Labour Party organiser and socialist Cathal O'Shannon resided above their business for a time, while employed in Cork.[77]

A detailed '*Irish Independent*' report from June 1921 described how the British Crown Government in Westminster had released a Parliamentary Paper describing an alleged Bolshevist "plot" involving Sinn Féin and the IRA, based on a supposed draft treaty between the Russian Soviet Government and the self-declared "Irish Republic." The document had allegedly been seized in Dublin and was presented as evidence of political and potentially military cooperation between Irish separatists and the Bolsheviks. The captured draft treaty, dated June 1919, was said to have been written by or for Dr Patrick McCartan, a Sinn Féin

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[77] *'The Extraordinary Wallace Sisters' (2016). The Spirit of Mother Jones Festival.*

envoy who had travelled to Russia. It outlined proposed formal relations between the Irish Republic and Soviet Russia. Although it appeared unfinished, it suggested:

- Mutual diplomatic recognition between the Irish Republic and the Russian Soviet Republic.
- A programme of material exchange, in which Russia would supply arms, munitions, and possibly money to Ireland.
- Ireland, in turn, would provide political support, host Soviet representatives, and use influence within its "territory" to promote Soviet interests.
- Russia would back Ireland's claim to independence and help the Irish cause within any international forum resembling a future League of Nations.
- These points were portrayed by the British authorities as a framework for a clandestine alliance between Sinn Féin and international communism.

Accompanying memoranda, attributed to the "President" of the Irish Republic (the article did not say who exactly), discussed the strategic use of relations with Russia. They stressed that even preliminary agreements could secure items that Ireland "most required" - particularly arms and munitions, which were banned under British law. The writer suggested that the mere opening of negotiations with Moscow would allow Sinn Féin to access weapons needed to resist British authority. Another memorandum tried to justify the idea of a future League of Nations functioning in a way that Ireland could use to its advantage. By creating networks of smaller nations - including Soviet Russia - Sinn Féin hoped to circumvent traditional diplomatic isolation.

The article reproduced several of the "remarkable" clauses which the British Government emphasised as proof of subversive intent:

- Clause 1: Soviet Russia would provide rifles and ammunition to Ireland.
- Clause 2: Soviet Russia and Ireland would guarantee free transport of goods and men, implying covert movement of personnel.

- Clauses on religious freedom suggested Russia would permit Irish religious institutions to operate freely inside Russia, which the article implied was unusual under a regime known for anti-religious policies.
- Economic clauses proposed that Ireland might help Soviet Russia secure imports through new companies or joint corporations - an arrangement described as potentially dangerous because it could be used for funding revolutionary guerrilla activity.

The British commentary interpreted these as evidence that Sinn Féin had been willing to trade Irish independence for Bolshevist support, thereby linking Irish separatism to an international communist movement. One detailed clause concerned the supply of 3,000 rifles and three million rounds of ammunition, with Russia supposedly pledging to deliver them in instalments. The text suggested that this alone justified pursuing relations with Soviet Russia. Another section covered the idea of Sinn Féin appointing agents to deal directly with Soviet authorities for the procurement of weapons. The British summary claimed this clearly showed Sinn Féin had considered arming itself with help from Moscow and had seen the treaty as a practical mechanism for acquiring munitions otherwise unobtainable.

The article featured a section on Dr McCartan's journey to Russia. It included extracts of his letter describing attempts to meet the Soviet leadership, noting that the Russian Government had been willing to receive him and had been prepared to discuss formal ties. According to the letter, he had engaged in talks meant to improve Ireland's standing abroad, and he believed Russian support could help Ireland diplomatically and materially. The Westminster interpretation framed these travels as further evidence of direct Sinn Féin–Bolshevik engagement.

Another memorandum included warnings that Ireland would need to secure and protect its exports if relations with Russia moved forward. The British used this to argue that Irish separatist leaders had contemplated not only political but also commercial cooperation with Moscow, potentially enabling

Soviet economic penetration of Ireland. The article concluded with commentary from Northern unionist sources, predicting that any alliance between Sinn Féin and Soviet Russia would have severe consequences for Ulster. It stressed fears that Bolshevist methods - confiscations, revolutionary courts, and ideological influence - would spread into Ireland if Sinn Féin succeeded. The article implied that unionists saw the document as confirmation that Sinn Féin's real aims aligned with violent revolution, not merely independence in parliamentary governance.

The piece presented the alleged treaty and memoranda as credible proof that Sinn Féin (and, by implication, what would serve the IRA) had been pursuing ideological and military solidarity with the Bolsheviks of Russia. The British Government used the documents to argue that:

- Sinn Féin had actively sought Bolshevik recognition and assistance.
- The movement had allegedly been willing to accept Communist arms and possibly funds.
- Irish independence efforts were intertwined with wider revolutionary schemes.
- A Soviet-Irish alliance, if realised, could have brought Bolshevist influence directly into the British Isles.[78]

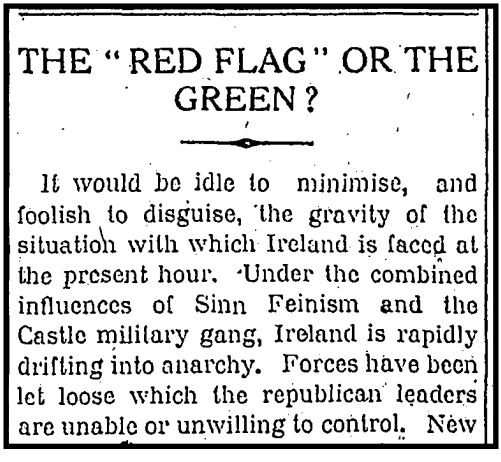
The significance of trade union organisers in the struggle during this period is well-exemplified in the case of Tadhg Barry, an alderman/city councillor on Cork Corporation. As noted in 2011 by Trevor Quinn of SIPTU, Barry was a committed republican, Sinn Féin activist, and trade unionist whose life was devoted to the cause of Irish independence and workers' rights. He was a founding member and secretary of Sinn Féin in Cork (1906–08), an officer in the Irish Volunteers from 1913, and active in the Cork branch of the IT&GWU, leading campaigns for farm labourers' wages and the 1920 docks strike. Barry had shared a platform with James Connolly in Cork on two occasions. He served as a Cork delegate to the 1917 Sinn Féin convention at the

[78] *Irish Independent 10/6/1921*

Mansion House and was elected alderman in the 1920 municipal elections, helping form the first republican-controlled Corporation of Cork, alongside Lord Mayors Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney. On November 15th, 1921, just weeks before the Anglo-Irish Treaty, he was shot through the heart by a Crown sentry. His funeral drew unprecedented respect: over 30,000 marched behind his coffin, Cork City closed in his honour, and the cortege was led by the IRA, with churchmen, politicians, and even Michael Collins (who was supposed to be in London) in attendance. Tadhg Barry's life and death exemplify his central role in Ireland's intertwined republican-labour struggles.[79]

[79] *Trevor Quinn (2011). 'Campaign to Commemorate Cork Trade Union and Republican Activist.' An Phoblacht https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/1187*

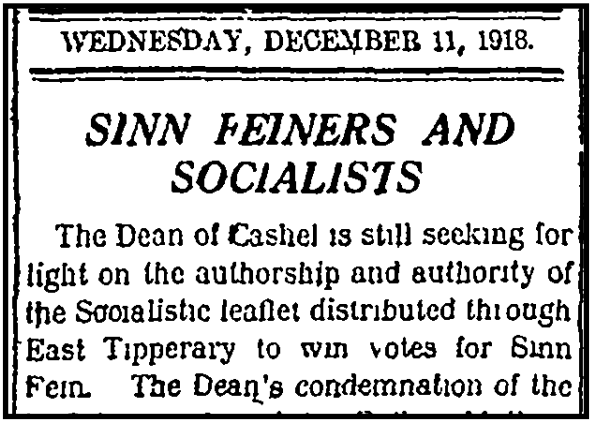
William Partridge, a city councillor on Dublin Corporation (affiliated to the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress), was a well-known participant in the 1916 Easter Rising with the ICA. He was documented for combining Roman Catholicism with Socialism. Irish Republicans cheered on his release from prison in 1917.
(Photo source: An Phoblacht)



THE "RED FLAG" OR THE GREEN?

It would be idle to minimise, and foolish to disguise, the gravity of the situation with which Ireland is faced at the present hour. Under the combined influences of Sinn Feinism and the Castle military gang, Ireland is rapidly drifting into anarchy. Forces have been let loose which the republican leaders are unable or unwilling to control. New

The mainstream press had suspected that the growing revolutionary movement in Ireland was one of a "Bolshevik" nature. (Source: 'Evening Telegraph' 2/2/1918)



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1918.

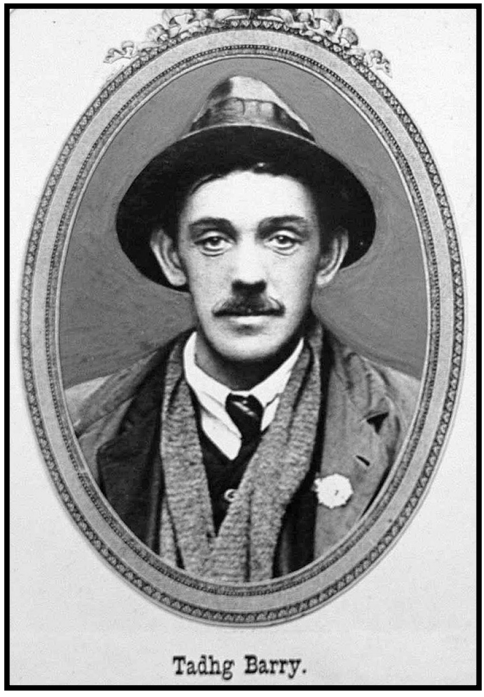
SINN FEINERS AND SOCIALISTS

The Dean of Cashel is still seeking for light on the authorship and authority of the Socialistic leaflet distributed through East Tipperary to win votes for Sinn Fein. The Dean's condemnation of the

The Catholic Dean of Cashel launched a campaign of alarm regarding the "Socialistic" material promoted in support of a Sinn Féin campaign in the 1918 General Election.
(Source: Freeman's Journal 11/12/1918)

Countess Constance Georgina de Markievicz's association with revolutionary socialism from the 1916 Easter Rising onwards was derided by the mainstream, constitutional nationalist press in Ireland, who contrasted her political activity against her landed social background.
(Photo source: Socialist Worker 21/3/2022)

The social and economic aspects of Terence MacSwiney's 'The Principles of Freedom' exemplified an anti-capitalist dimension, clearly framing "capitalists" against "patriots."
(Photo source: Cork City & County Archives)



An estimated 30,000 people attended the funeral of Tadhg Barry, an IRA and IT&GWU activist who was elected as an alderman on Cork Corporation in 1920. (Photo source: An Phoblacht)

The 'Starry Plough' flag flown in the 1916 Rising.
(Photo source: RTÉ)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE CIVIL WAR & AFTERMATH

Gerry Adams argues in '*The Politics of Irish Freedom*' that following the establishment of the Irish Free State, the social aims outlined in the 1916 Proclamation and the revolutionary Democratic Programme of the First Dáil were effectively abandoned after 'independence.' While there had been limited attempts to implement them initially, they were soon set aside entirely. Partition not only divided the island territorially but also undermined national sovereignty, though economic power remained concentrated and unpartitioned, controlled by the same elite. England continued to exert influence through established commercial and institutional structures. According to Adams, the Cumann na nGaedheal government that governed the Free State from 1922 to 1932 represented the most pro-British and pro-capitalist elements in Irish society. Their economic interests - in commerce, banking, trade, large-scale farming, and professional sectors - necessitated close ties with Great Britain. As Liam Mellows observed, those with a vested interest in the country were never committed to the 1916 republic. Both Mellows and James Connolly highlighted that a political revolution without an accompanying economic transformation simply replaced British rulers with Irish capitalists, who benefited from the country's supposed freedom while perpetuating the same economic inequalities as their predecessors. The Free State implemented the Treaty with harshness, sometimes exceeding even the repression in Northern Ireland, and shaped the state to serve the interests of its controlling elites. Workers and small farmers in the south gained little from this independence, and nationalists in the north were left unsupported. The later emergence of Fianna Fáil reflected the constitutionalist interests of smaller manufacturers and traders, contrasting with the larger economic actors - private bankers, landlords, and merchants - who largely aligned with Cumann na nGaedheal, later Fine Gael.[80]

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[80] *Adams, Gerry (1986). 'The Politics of Irish Freedom.' Brandon.*

An '*Irish Times*' feature by Jeffrey Leddin from 2019 hints at the social dynamics of the civil conflict - most of those who had been active in the Irish Citizens' Army had taken the Anti-Treaty side.[81]

The historian Emmet O'Connor, writing in '*Syndicalism in Ireland*,' outlines that the second phase of industrial confrontation to take place after the 'Split' was only partially successful. February 1922 brought another brief illusion of "decisive conflict," as labour disputes spread beyond transport to other sectors such as tailoring, milling, canal work, and dairying. The docks and postal services faced the constant threat of disruption. Small, selective strikes were increasingly common in the provinces, and illegal direct action was beginning to re-emerge. In late January 1922, the first of approximately eighty workplace occupations that year occurred at the market town of Mallow, Co. Cork, where strikers had seized the Quartertown flour mills. Attempts to reduce wages in the dairy sector sparked a wave of soviets in May, with creameries and milk factories owned by the Cleeve combine being occupied. Timber workers and gas-workers also declared soviets, although these actions were sometimes condemned by the IT&GWU and caused tensions within the union. Most of these incidents took place in Munster, which remained under IRA influence until August and was the least responsive to the authority of the Provisional Government.[82]

During a Dáil debate on the Treaty, Constance Georgina de Markievicz declared in a parliamentary speech that:

> "*I object to any Government of that sort whereby a privileged number of classes established here by British rule are to be given a say - to this small minority of traitors and oppressors - in the form of an Upper Chamber as against all, I might say, modern ideas of common sense, of the people who*

[81] *Irish Times 25/4/2019*

[82] *O'Connor, Emmet (1988). 'Syndicalism in Ireland.' Cork University Press*

wish to build up a prosperous, contented nation. But looking as I do for the prosperity of the many, for the happiness and content of the workers, for what I stand, James Connolly's ideal of a Workers' Republic…"

At this point, an unnamed Deputy interjected by saying "Soviet Republic." Continuing from the interruption, Constance Markievicz declared:

> "*… co-operative commonwealth, these men who have opposed everything are to be elected and upheld by our plenipotentiaries; and I suppose they are to be the Free State, or the Cheap State Army, or whatever selection these men are, to be set up to uphold English interests in Ireland, to uphold the capitalists' interests in Ireland, to block every ideal that the nation may wish to formulate; to block the teaching of Irish, to block the education of the poorer classes; to block, in fact, every bit of progress that every man and woman in Ireland to-day amongst working people desire to see put into force. That is one of the biggest blots on this Treaty; this deliberate attempt to set up a privileged class in this, what they call a Free State, that is not free. I would like the people here who represent the workers to take that into consideration - to say to themselves what can the working people expect in an Ireland that is being run by men who, at the time of the Treaty, are willing to guarantee this sort of privilege to a class that every thinking man and woman in Ireland despises*."

At a later stage, she remarked that:

> "*But while Ireland is not free I remain a rebel, unconverted and unconvertible. There is no word strong enough for it. I am pledged as a rebel, an unconvertible rebel, because I am pledged to the one thing - a free and independent Republic. Now we have been sneered at for being Republicans by*

even men who fought for the Republic. We have been told that we didn't know what we meant. Now I know what I mean - a state run by the Irish people for the people. That means a Government that looks after the rights of the people before the rights of property. And I don't wish under the Saorstát to anticipate that the directors of this and the capitalists' interests are to be at the head of it. My idea is the Workers' Republic for which Connolly died. And I say that that is one of the things that England wishes to prevent. She would sooner give us Home Rule than a democratic Republic. It is the capitalists' interests in England and Ireland that are pushing this Treaty to block the march of the working people in England and Ireland. Now, we were offered a Treaty in the first place because England was in a tight place. She wanted her troops for more dirty work elsewhere. Because Dáil Eireann was too democratic, because her Law Courts were too just, because the will of the people was being done, and justice was being done, and the wellbeing of the people was considered, the whole people were behind us….

... James Connolly said, the last time I heard him speak - he spoke to me and to others - a few phrases that very much sum up the situation to-day. It was just before Easter Week in 1916. We had heard the news that certain people had called off the Rising. One man wishing to excuse them, to exonerate them, said: "So and so does not care to take the responsibility of letting people go to their death when there is so little chance of victory.""Oh," said Connolly, "there is only one sort of responsibility I am afraid of and that is preventing the men and women of Ireland fighting and dying for Ireland if they are so minded." That was almost the last word that was said to me by a man who died for Ireland, a man who was my Commandant, and I have always thought of that since, and I have

always felt that that was a message which I had to deliver to the people of Ireland."[83]

During March 1922, a report in the '*Voice of Labour*' from the town of Cahir, South County Tipperary, described a new campaign by local trade unionists affiliated to the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (IT&GWU) to organise non-unionised workers ("slackers"). Under the leadership of Thomas O'Toole, pickets of mill, creamery, sawmill, and estate workers were formed to bring others into the union. An anecdote recounted how a local squire complained when he could not summon the Black and Tans to remove the picket from his property; he was told by O'Toole that he must "join the Irish workers." The piece also thanked the local I.R.A. commander for helping to confront an allegedly exploitative road contractor, who got his men drunk and kept them idle. The article ended by saying that this corrupt system had been changed and that "the poor man on the roads will get fair play for the future."[84]

On 4 February 1922, the '*Voice of Labour*' newspaper ran an article titled 'Labour and the Irish Republic' by IRA leader, Liam Mellows. He had argued that the success of the Irish Revolution would have opened a new era for labour, not merely a change of political symbols. He insisted that Irish freedom meant far more than replacing British rule with an Irish flag. He explained that freedom and independence, as commonly used, had become vague terms that could be twisted to mean very little. Simply declaring a republic, he warned, would not automatically solve Ireland's problems. True freedom required much deeper change. Mellows described the revolution in Ireland as having three inseparable dimensions: intellectual, political, and economic. Intellectually, Ireland had to reclaim its identity and free itself from the dominance of foreign ideas imposed through centuries of occupation. Politically, the withdrawal of British military and administrative power and the international

[83] *Dáil Éireann debate - Tuesday, 3 Jan 1922 Vol. T No. 10.*

[84] *Voice of Labour 18/3/1922*

recognition of the Irish Republic were necessary steps. These changes, he believed, would allow the Irish government to focus on internal social and economic problems rather than external control. He argued that political independence without economic transformation would have left Ireland effectively enslaved. If the existing economic system remained intact, Irish capitalists would merely have replaced British ones, continuing the exploitation of workers while benefiting from political freedom. A political revolution without an economic one, he said, would only have changed who held power, not how power was used.

Mellows rejected the idea that Ireland needed new masters. He stated that Ireland did not want to exchange foreign tyranny for domestic tyranny. True freedom meant that the people themselves must own Ireland. The country, he believed, belonged to all its people, not to any elite group or class. He pointed to the Democratic Programme adopted by Dáil Éireann in January 1919 as evidence of this vision. That programme declared that the land, wealth, and wealth-producing resources of Ireland belonged to the people as a whole and should be controlled for their benefit. In his conclusion, Mellows argued that the conflict between the Irish people and the British government was not simply a struggle between two nations. It was a clash between two civilisations: the feudal-capitalist system represented by modern England and the democratic social order on which ancient Irish civilisation had been based. Although remnants of that older system still survived in Ireland, he believed they were growing stronger. The end of foreign rule in Ireland, Mellows concluded, would not only have ushered in a new political era, but also a new economic one, finally aligning national freedom with social and economic justice.[85]

An article by the Free State Minister, Ernest Blythe, T.D., published in an early issue of '*An Saorstát (The Free State)*' on 22 April 1922, warned that a substantial faction of anti-Treaty IRA "mutineers" harboured Bolshevik-inspired ambitions to destabilise and overthrow the Provisional

[85] *Voice of Labour 4/2/1922*

Government of the Irish Free State, drawing direct parallels to the revolutionary tactics employed in Soviet Russia. Blythe asserted that these mutineers, unlike the supposedly vacillating followers of Éamon de Valera, possessed a clear and deliberate plan to forsake the Treaty with Great Britain, which he described as the best fighting position Ireland had secured after years of conflict. He criticised de Valera's "Document No. 2" as a weaker alternative that would have left Ireland vulnerable, and praised the Treaty's signatories for achieving a more substantial concession than appeared on the surface, allowing for gradual advancement toward full independence without immediate war. Blythe highlighted how the mutineers allegedly eyed Russia's Bolshevik model, where a small, intensely active minority had mobilised masses through strikes, unemployment agitation, and industrial unrest, starting locally and expanding to encompass larger areas until demands shifted from economic to revolutionary political changes. He detailed how this approach in Ireland involved undermining the army through mutiny, refusing peaceful negotiations, and engaging in occasional instances of looting and confiscations in order to disorganise production and transportation, ultimately aiming to establish a dictatorship that would render the Provisional Government helpless. The article emphasised that such tactics would lead to chaos, economic breakdown, and a short but destructive civil war, mirroring Russia's descent into famine, tyranny, and mass suffering under Lenin and Trotsky, where promises of freedom had resulted in oppression and the slaughter of millions. Blythe also cited international examples, including the Father of the Resurrection of Hungary and George Vale-Lloyd, to underscore how revolutionary leaders like those in Russia had promised liberty but delivered despotism, and he predicted that the Irish people, weary of coercion, would reject the “mutineers’" methods, ensuring their ultimate failure without foreign support like Russia’s. The piece concluded by asserting that the “mutineers” (Anti-Treatyites) underestimated the Irish people's resolve, as demonstrated by their support for the Treaty, and warned that persistence in Bolshevik-style tactics would alienate the masses, leading to the “mutineers’" isolation and defeat. Blythe positioned the

Free State as the path to genuine progress, free from the ruinous experiments seen in Russia, and called for unity under the Provisional Government to prevent a descent into anarchy and preserve nationhood.[86]

In early 1922, a Dublin-based correspondent known as "J." had written a letter to '*The Communist*' in London. In response, T. A. Jackson had published a detailed reply, which was later reprinted a late April 1922 edition of the '*Voice of Labour*' (the print organ of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union) for Irish readers. Jackson's article examined the key arguments raised by "J." about the Irish political situation, class struggle, and the role of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Communist Party. Jackson began by referring to a past statement made by the Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.) during the time when the Treaty was under discussion in Dáil Éireann. The Party had issued a manifesto expressing its position clearly. It had declared that when the Irish people were fighting against British imperial terrorism, the Communist Party supported them. Firstly, it did so because there was no other way to dissociate itself from the imperial terror. Secondly, it supported the struggle because any movement fighting against imperialism naturally became an ally in the wider struggle for emancipation. The C.P.G.B. had joined the Communist Party of Ireland in warning the Irish workers that the Treaty's acceptance would only make their fight for freedom far more difficult. It would hand over Ireland's revolutionary forces to the control of reactionaries who would use all the resources of British imperialism against them. The C.P.G.B. had therefore called upon Irish workers and toiling masses to prepare for a determined, disciplined struggle, refusing any association with the Treaty. It had urged Irish Republicans, who remained loyal to the principles of Pearse and Connolly, to persevere with the fight for full emancipation.

Since that time, Jackson noted, much had occurred to prove the truth of that position. Events such as the Irish Republican Army's revolt against General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) had

[86] *Free State 22/4/1922*

demonstrated the widespread hostility toward the Treaty among the Irish people, especially among the rank and file. Jackson pointed out that "J." had exaggerated by suggesting that a majority of the IRA would support any party in power; in fact, the evidence showed the opposite. The heart of "J."'s argument, Jackson explained, rested on the claim that most Irish people were "farmers." Jackson accepted that most of Ireland's population were indeed hard-working people - some large farmers, some small-holders or peasants, and many labourers who owned no land at all - but he stressed that this reality had to be analysed economically, not sentimentally. He argued that one of the great consequences of the war had been the interruption of emigration. Before the war, Ireland's "surplus population" had often emigrated, but after the war, as emigration slowed, the pressure on land grew. Young men who might once have left now stayed, and their need for land increased. "J." had correctly said that the desire for land remained strong among rural workers, even those who still did not possess any. During the period of the Irish Republic's functioning, Jackson said, the government had at least tried to tackle the land problem seriously. Through its land courts, it had pursued policies of fair redistribution with some success. But now, the situation had changed. The small-holder who worked his own plot or employed a few labourers was being crushed by high prices, falling markets, and wage cuts. Those who had no land, or only a small holding, faced poverty and insecurity.

Jackson described the rural social structure in Marxist terms. There were the capitalist farmers - those seeking to maximise profits by cutting wages, pushing out small-holders, and monopolising local markets. There were the small-holders and labourers, who often struggled to maintain even modest independence. Though rural people made up six-sevenths of Southern Ireland's population, Jackson insisted that they did not form a single economic or political class. Instead, most were proletarian or semi-proletarian. He argued that it was wrong for "J." to lump all "farmers" together and to contrast them simplistically with urban workers. The vast majority of Ireland's rural population, he said, lived in essentially the same economic conditions as industrial labourers. They

shared the same basic class interest in opposing capitalism. Both the rural and urban workers, he contended, were united by their antagonism to the capitalist and landlord classes who exploited them. Moreover, Jackson insisted that Irish national ideology - shaped since the days of Pearse and Connolly - had always asserted the right of the Irish people to control their own material resources. This ideology, he believed, was inherently socialist in its direction, opposing the capitalist control of land, labour, and production. For that reason, he maintained that the rural working classes and the town proletariat could and should unite in a common cause to preserve the Irish Republic and to establish what he called a Workers' Republic. Jackson argued that British capitalism would never willingly allow the existence of such a republic because it would threaten imperial control. Nonetheless, he believed that Irish workers could achieve it if they pursued the socialist vision of Connolly - an independent republic based not on bourgeois rule, but on the power of labour itself.

Addressing "J."'s claim that the IRA was mostly composed of farmers or farmers' sons, Jackson countered that this was misleading. It was false if "farmer" was taken to mean a large or middle capitalist farmer. In reality, he wrote, the majority of the IRA's rank and file came from the rural proletariat or semi-proletariat - small-holders, agricultural labourers, and the sons of poor farmers. Even though some of the officers came from more comfortable backgrounds, the movement as a whole remained working-class in character. He concluded that, in his opinion, while the Irish Labour Party had failed to play a leading revolutionary role in 1921, it still possessed the potential to do so. Because of its unique position linking town and country workers, the Labour Party could have stood alongside the Republican movement against the Treaty, championing the cause of the working class. Instead, it had hesitated. Yet Jackson maintained that only by embracing this path - the path of the working-class struggle for the Workers' Republic - could Ireland truly secure independence and social justice.[87]

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[87] *Voice of Labour 29/4/1922*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

In May 1922, the '*Workers' Republic*' reported that the I.R.A., acting on orders from its Army Council, had taken over the Ballast Office, which housed the Dublin Port and Docks Board. The Board immediately claimed that this action would force it to dismiss port workers, arguing that it could not operate without access to its records. The press quickly echoed this claim and condemned the Republicans, presenting the takeover as an attack on workers. The paper, referring to "Free State trickery," had dismissed this argument as deliberately misleading. He asserted that the Board's claim was nonsense and that, since its members largely supported the Free State, they were prepared to use deception to turn public opinion against the Republicans. Even if the offices and records had been destroyed, the Board could still have continued port operations. The episode, he argued, exposed the Board as dishonest and self-serving rather than competent business managers. To underline this point, the article compared the Ballast Office with the Four Courts, a far more important institution that had also been occupied by the I.R.A. for weeks. Despite its central role in Irish legal and property systems, no serious attempt had been made to halt its operations. This was because those who relied on the Four Courts for employment were not working-class labourers but professionals who served the interests of employers and property owners, and arrangements were easily made to keep the institution functioning.

The author further claimed that the Port and Docks Board had exploited the situation to provoke hostility towards the Republicans. He stated that the dock workers had already been serving notice when the Ballast Office was taken over, as around 500 men had been given a week's notice the previous Friday. After the occupation, they were encouraged to demonstrate and were promised half a day's pay if they marched in protest. By contrast, when the workers had been locked out during a one-day anti-militarist strike, they had received no pay. Once paid off, the men realised they had been manipulated. The article described a subsequent demonstration involving about 200 workers who marched from Beresford Place to the Mansion House, led by striking

Woolworth workers carrying red flags. The Lord Mayor received them and undertook to present their demands to the Port and Docks Board, including reinstatement without victimisation, payment for the anti-militarist strike day, and outstanding wages. A deputation was to attend the Board's meeting. In conclusion, the writer argued that the Board's tactics needed to be exposed and that the dismissed workers should have been reinstated with full back pay, as the offices had already been vacated. He condemned union officials who had threatened Woolworth strikers with the loss of strike pay if they joined the march, praising the women for defying them. The article ended with an appeal to Dublin workers to support the dock labourers, insisting that their struggle was part of a wider working-class fight.[88]

During early July 1922, the '*Free State*' periodical attacked the motives of the Anti-Treaty IRA. The article outlined a perceived conspiracy by one section of the directors of the-then "revolt against the authority of the people of Ireland," which aimed to bring back British troops into Ireland. The objective of another section, it claimed, was the overthrow of society, and the establishment of a despotism disguised as Communism. It claimed that an "obscure" paper published by the latter section in Dublin under a title intended to supposedly mislead people into the belief that it was an organ of the workers had appeared as early as January that year. It laid down a plan for the overthrow of the Irish Government, which subsequently was sought to be carried out by many of those who pretended high patriotism. It remarked that the Communist Party would seek to exert enough influence on the larger proletarian organisations, such as the Trade Unions, which were supposedly always controlled by an insignificant, yet intensely active minority, such as the supporters of the Communist-bloc trade union bureaucracy, to mobilise the forces of these masses against the Provisional Government, resulting from, say, the railway-unrest situation prevailing, unemployed agitators afterwards, or other industrial trouble that was bound to crop up. Under revolutionary leadership the extent of these, at first purely

[88] *Workers' Republic 13/5/1922*

local, strikes would grow and embrace ever larger areas and ever greater masses of workers, and with this growth and the consequent realisation of their power by the strikers, demands and colouring of this movement against the Provisional Government would gradually change from being merely industrial to being political. This would change from demands for petty industrial Reforms to great Political and Revolutionary demands. The National Army, it claimed, was next to be undermined by the "insignificant but intensely active" minority, which was to "gradually arrogate" to itself the powers of government and by refusing "all peaceful negotiation" compel the Irish Government to abdicate or to use force. "Occasional Lootings and Confiscations" were to be made in order to "completely disorganise the country" and eventually "all production and transportation" were to be "absolutely stopped," except such as the conspirators needed for themselves. The Irish Government would witness "its authority being destroyed day by day and its forces helpless, while the 'insignificant but intensely active' minority became 'masters of the country.'" This particular programme, the '*Free State*' claimed, was attempted to be carried out, and it culminated in the ongoing conflict. One factor those who designed it, it claimed, forgot to reckon with "the People."[89]

In late July 1922, Sean McLoughlin authored an article on the front page of '*The Workers Republic*' titled "How the Republicans May Win," arguing that the Irish Republicans could achieve victory in their struggle against the Free State and British imperialism by aligning closely with the working class and peasants to establish a socialist Workers' Republic. McLoughlin contended that the Republican leadership's primary focus had been on purely sentimental appeals for a Republic separated from Britain, supported by advanced Irish Labour/worker elements to smash British imperialism, but this approach, he claimed, overlooked the masses' economic pressures and failed to address their exhaustion from war and ongoing exploitation by bosses and landlords. McLoughlin believed that the Republicans and Irish Labour alone would be incapable of defeating imperialism. He emphasised that

[89] *Free State 5/7/1922*

the people remained unmoved by high politics or impassioned rhetoric alone, as their daily lives were still marked by wage slavery under a rod of iron, and they lacked the will to fight solely for a change in political form without substantive social improvements. McLoughlin criticised the Republicans for their present precarious position, attributing it to hesitation and vacillation while the Free State concentrated its forces, and urged them to adopt a revolutionary program based upon the masses, comprising the landless peasants, social ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the property of the landless peasants. He proposed that such a program would be absolutely invincible, presenting the needs of the masses as comprising the ranches to become the property of the landless peasants, social ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. McLoughlin warned that without this shift, the Republicans risked betrayal and defeat, as seen in the clouds of persuasion that had failed him, as was inevitable. The article further asserted that Republicans had to grasp their opportunity to rally the workers and peasants by promising and implementing radical changes, such as taking control of heavy industries, banks, the creameries., and the control of land, commerce and housing to be placed in the hands of councils elected by workers and peasants. McLoughlin highlighted the strategic progressions that became more and more evident that the Free State had isolated the Republicans from London, through nominally controlled upon the Irish Free State Government, was dependent for its military supplies and organisation from the British War Office for its military had been conducted upon practically the same lines as done so by the Crown rulers. The whole of the police force in Dublin, and with it all the detective branch, had been incorporated into the Free State, had been established at Oriel House, under the control of former I.R.A. men, with importation of arms for the rebel forces when the struggle against the "Black and Tans" was raging. This spy department possessed all the usual features of arrests, etc., were conducted in a vindictive spirit that exceeds even the procedure of the old detective and police raids. There was no respect, he claimed, shown to anybody. Terrorism and militarism were the order

of the day, and over all ruled the sacred spirit of private property and private exploitation. McLoughlin stressed that the war between the Republicans and the Free Staters had entered upon all its most desperate stage. After the fall of the old post office on O'Connell Street, and the subsequent evacuation by the Republicans, he noted that the big business-backed media, as the “hirelings of Imperialist Britain,” in their newspapers, were jubilant, proclaiming a "glorious victory.” However, their celebrations were short lived, he claimed, as the Republicans had moved away from Dublin to concentrate their campaign on the south of Ireland.[90]

The ‘*Free State*’, in an August 1922 article, critiqued the Irish Labour Party-linked organ, ‘*The Voice of Labour*,’ for adopting a policy that attempted to maintain a neutral or balanced stance amid the ongoing conflict between the Free State government and anti-Treaty “mutineers” during the Irish Civil War period. It described this approach as unsuccessful, accusing the paper of trying to portray both sides as equally responsible for disrupting property rights, industry, trade unionism, and Bolshevism simultaneously, thereby confusing workers and fostering worse chaos than the outdated Donnybrook fair. The piece suggested that delegates at the upcoming Labour Congress in August of the year would have a chance to challenge their leaders on key questions: Did they support order and government or rowdyism and anarchy? Did workers' interests lie in promoting trade, industry, peace, and security under majority rule? Extending the critique, the article questioned whether Labour organisations could function without majority rule and if they stood for constructive or destructive aims. If constructive, what steps had they taken toward trade unionism or Bolshevism? If the former, did they accept democratic community rule and work toward it? If they claimed allegiance to James Connolly's tradition and the Red Flag, why did they dismiss Labour organisers involved in factory seizures, and why were they rejected by Communist agents in Ireland, Britain, and Russia? The critique

[90] *The Workers' Republic 29/7/1922*

emphasised that without trade and industry, essentials like food and clothing could not be obtained, and these required security upheld by a single army and police force under one national authority, supported by good citizens to suppress malefactors and collect debts. Ultimately, it accused Labour of indecision, likening it to sitting between two stools: it must choose to be "fish or flesh or good red-herring" rather than trying to be all three at once.[91]

An article titled “A Soviet ‘Trump-Card’”, published in the ‘*Freemans Journal*’ on 5 August 1922, was a strongly pro-Free State and anti-Republican piece. It claimed that the Irish Republican or “Irregular” movement - those fighting against the Anglo-Irish Treaty - was being manipulated by Communist Russia as part of a global revolutionary plan. The paper presented the Irish Civil War as not merely a national struggle but a move in Moscow’s international game, portraying the anti-Treaty forces as unwitting instruments of a new Soviet strategy. According to the article, a “secret circular” from the Third (Moscow) International, or Comintern, had been intercepted and quoted in a London newspaper. The circular allegedly outlined how nationalist movements like Ireland’s could be exploited for Communist ends. It claimed that the Irish revolutionary movement was “gradually changing from purely national forms into social political forms,” suggesting that Ireland’s struggle for independence was ripe to be turned into a class war. Moscow, it asserted, wished to push nationalist revolutions in Europe beyond their political aims and transform them into social revolutions that would undermine capitalism. The circular supposedly praised the work of an agent called “Comrade Brian,” who was said to be operating in Ireland to spread Communist ideas among revolutionaries. The Comintern’s executive committee allegedly applauded this agent’s success in encouraging Irish radicals to move beyond nationalism and towards a socialist or Bolshevik vision. The article presented this as evidence that Moscow’s aim was to turn Ireland into a “card in the game” - a pawn to be used in diplomatic manoeuvres against Britain and other Western

[91] *Free State 5/8/1922*

powers. By fostering disorder in Ireland and keeping Britain occupied with unrest on its doorstep, the Soviets could weaken the stability of Western Europe as a whole. The '*Freemans Journal*' added its own commentary to this supposed revelation, accusing the anti-Treaty "Irregulars" of being "eager allies of the Bolsheviks." It claimed that the destruction and chaos caused by Republican forces served Moscow's interests perfectly. Though the Irregulars might have believed they were fighting for Irish freedom, the article argued that they were, in reality, aiding an international Communist conspiracy. The paper warned readers that the Free State government was Ireland's only protection against this subversive threat. To strengthen its claim, the article quoted further from the alleged circular, which asserted that the Communist Executive Committee had secured funds to "begin working not only in Dublin but also in the counties and districts." This was presented as proof that Moscow (Soviet Russia) was directly financing unrest and attempting to spread Communist influence throughout Ireland. It was reported that Constance Markievicz had been appointed as a point of contact for the "Komintern" in Ireland.

Overall, the piece sought to delegitimise the anti-Treaty Republicans by portraying them as dupes of a foreign power. It reinforced the image of the Free State as the defender of order, democracy, and true Irish independence, while aligning it with the broader Western struggle against Bolshevism. The tone throughout was alarmist and propagandistic, appealing to public fears of Communist infiltration and chaos. Published at the height of the Irish Civil War, the article reflected the '*Freemans Journal's*' broader role as a pro-Treaty newspaper defending the legitimacy of the new state. It also mirrored wider European anxieties of the early 1920s, when fears of Bolshevik revolution and Soviet plots were widespread. By linking Irish Republicans to Moscow, the paper sought to justify the Free State's military campaign and to portray the Civil War as part of a global ideological conflict between order and anarchy, rather than a purely Irish dispute over sovereignty. In short, the '*Freemans Journal*' argued that anti-Treaty forces were being cynically manipulated by Moscow as part of a

Communist plan to destabilise Western Europe. The article used the alleged Comintern document as evidence to suggest that the Republican cause was not patriotic at all but served foreign, revolutionary ends. Through this narrative, the '*Freemans Journal*' portrayed the Free State as the bulwark defending Ireland - and Western civilisation - against the threat of Bolshevism.

The second part of the article, titled "'Irregulars' Eager Allies - Policy of the Communist Party of Ireland," served as a direct continuation and reinforcement of the '*Freemans Journal's*' argument that the anti-Treaty or "Irregular" forces were unintentionally assisting Soviet aims. It presented itself as a commentary on the alleged Moscow circular discussed in the first section, but shifted the focus more explicitly to events in Ireland and the supposed activities of Irish Communists. The piece began by citing a report from the '*Times*' about a recent circular from the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI). This circular, it claimed, showed the "eager alliance" between the Irish Communists and the anti-Treaty Republicans. The '*Freemans Journal*' used this as further proof that the Irregulars' actions during the Civil War were aligning perfectly with Moscow's revolutionary strategy. The paper implied that, whether knowingly or not, the Irregulars were following the political line dictated by Soviet agents and Irish Communists operating under their influence. According to the '*Freemans Journal*,' the Communist Party of Ireland had called on its members to support the anti-Treaty cause and to take advantage of the turmoil created by the Civil War. The circular reportedly urged Communists to "intensify their work" among the working classes, especially in cities and industrial centres, by spreading propaganda against the Free State government. The CPI's policy was portrayed as deliberately designed to deepen class divisions and undermine public confidence in the Provisional Government, mirroring Moscow's wider tactic of turning nationalist conflicts into social revolutions. The paper went on to accuse the Irregulars of making this Communist infiltration possible through their reckless campaign of destruction. It argued that their attacks on railways, public buildings, and the economic life of the country were playing

directly into Communist hands. In the Freeman's Journal's view, every act of sabotage or resistance against the Free State contributed to the breakdown of order and the creation of the very chaos upon which Bolshevism thrived.

The article also warned that Communist sympathisers were attempting to gain influence within trade unions and workers' organisations, exploiting discontent to draw Ireland closer to revolution. It claimed that Communist agents were working in tandem with the Irregulars to weaken both the state and the morale of the people. This connection, the paper insisted, proved that the anti-Treaty movement had ceased to be a purely Irish affair and had instead become part of a broader international plot against democracy and stability. In conclusion, the '*Freemans Journal*' used the "Irregulars Eager Allies" section to drive home the message that the Free State represented law, order, and national integrity, while the Irregulars embodied anarchy, subversion, and foreign manipulation. It warned readers that, unless the Free State prevailed, Ireland risked becoming a tool of the "Red International." The article's tone was alarmist and moralistic, appealing to patriotic and religious sensibilities by equating Bolshevism with atheism, chaos, and moral decay. Together with "A Soviet 'Trump-Card,'" this second section formed a coherent propaganda argument. It portrayed the Civil War not as a tragic internal conflict but as a front in the wider struggle between civilisation and revolution. The '*Freemans Journal*' thus sought to delegitimise the anti-Treaty side by associating it with the spectre of Communism, and to rally support for the Free State as Ireland's bulwark against both internal disorder and international subversion.[92]

A '*Voice of Labour*' article from mid-August 1922 reported that the Ballindangan, County Cork branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (IT&GWU) had revived its regular activity. It reported that the role played by this branch during the "Anglo-Irish War" was the cause for its being unable to function in a proper manner. The Secretary had been jailed and the local branch president, and most of

[92] *Freemans Journal 5/8/1922*

the members remained on active service with the IRA. An effort was subsequently being made to get the branch's affairs back in order. It believed that with the high quality of the trade union organisers in Cork "the difficulties of the present time should be conquered." It congratulated the local boys on their re-entry into the O.B.U ('One Big Union').[93]

On 22 September 1922, the '*Belfast Newsletter*' reported that, the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State had issued a statement purportedly containing the text of a Republican document which it claimed had fallen into its possession. The newspaper noted that the document outlined a proposed policy and plan of action for "the Republic" and was signed with the initials "L.M.," identified as Liam Mellows, a prominent Republican figure who had collaborated with fellow IRA Council member, Rory O'Connor, in the occupation of the Four Courts. According to the newspaper, the document was reportedly written while Mellows was in captivity and comprised three sections, dated 26 and 29 August and 11 September, respectively. The first section, it stated, advocated that a Provisional Republican Government "should be set up at once, even if it is unable to function or to function only in a most limited way - this to be done apart from the question of the Dáil." The article added that the Provisional Government had, the previous day, published a notice regarding the postponement of the Dáil, which, it claimed, was intended to convey the impression that the next Dáil would constitute a "Provisional Parliament" as defined by the Treaty. The newspaper reported that Mellows's document insisted that if the Dáil accepted this designation, rather than asserting itself as the Government of the Republic, the establishment of a Provisional Republican Government would become "most urgent."

The '*Belfast Newsletter*' stated that the document went on to outline a detailed plan for governing Ireland to the extent possible under a provisional Republican administration. It described a programme influenced by the idea of a "Workers'

[93] *Voice of Labour 12/8/1922*

Republic," advocating complete State control of industry and the confiscation and redistribution of aristocratic lands. The newspaper highlighted that the document also addressed potential food shortages. It stated that Mellows warned that "obstruction of roads, railways and communications will be intensified and towns will feel it worst." The paper reported that the document proposed a rationing system, preferably overseen by a Labour representative, and acknowledged that significant privations might be necessary to secure the Republic against both the Free State and Britain. The plan, the Newsletter noted, anticipated that while items like tea, sugar, and imported flour might be sacrificed, staple foods such as oatmeal and barley would continue to be supplied. The article concluded by recording Mellows's assertion that, in comparison, Ireland had endured relatively little hardship during either the Great War or the recent internal conflict. The '*Belfast Newsletter*' asserted that the Anti-Treaty Republicans had "Communism as [the] basis" for their plans to govern, if they prevailed.[94]

On 25 September 1922, debating the Constitution of Saorstát Éireann Bill, Minister Kevin O'Higgins moved Clause 11, which declared that:

> *"The rights of the State in and to natural resources the use of which is of national importance shall not be alienated. Their exploitation by private individuals or associations shall be permitted only under State supervision and in accordance with the Conditions and Regulations approved by Legislation."*

In response, William X. O'Brien of the pragmatic and constitutional Labour Party explained that an amendment he and his colleagues had proposed might be said to cover no more ground than the Clause as it then stood, but he stated that they preferred its wording as being more explicit. He said it more definitively laid down that the soil and natural resources of Ireland were vested in the Irish people, and that

[94] *Belfast Newsletter 22/9/1922*

those who might possess portions of the soil or have the right to exploit mineral resources would do so only on terms explicitly prescribed by the Nation. He declared that anyone who failed to use these resources, or misused them in a manner considered contrary to the welfare of the people as a whole, could be prevented from doing so by the State. O'Brien maintained that these resources were to be regarded as the estate of the Nation, and that their exploitation must serve the interests of the Nation as a whole. He argued that, under prevailing conditions in the world, a person in possession of land or instruments of production was generally considered entitled to exploit them for personal gain, and could withhold them from the service of humanity at large. He illustrated this by noting that if the owner of land decided, according to market conditions, that it was not desirable to cultivate the land for his own benefit, the land would remain uncultivated. O'Brien countered that such resources were essential to the welfare, happiness, and prosperity of the people as a whole. He asserted that the Legislature and the State should prescribe the conditions under which these resources were to be held and exploited. Ownership, he explained, should be understood in a limited sense - as the right to exploit the resources under such conditions for a limited period. If these conditions were not fulfilled, the State would have the right to resume possession and prescribe the terms under which the land and mineral resources were to be exploited. He concluded by formally moving the amendment. Minister O'Higgins stated that he had little to say on the matter, except that the Government preferred Article 11 as it then stood. He admitted, however, that they were not entirely satisfied with the Article and intended to give it further consideration. He remarked that much in Deputy William X. O'Brien's proposed amendment was calculated to alarm timid or cautious people. While some members, he said, might not personally be frightened by a mere word, it would nevertheless have been most unwise to incorporate in the Constitution - at the very outset of a new State, when success depended upon the goodwill and industry of all sections of the community - any provision that appeared to embody what looked very much like a Communistic doctrine. The parliamentary Labour leader,

Tom Johnson, interjected by mentioning the Democratic Programme of the revolutionary First Dáil. O'Higgins dismissed it, noting that it was not a constitution. In reply, Johnson remarked that it was the closest one could get to it. O'Higgins declared that there were people in the State who thought that they lived and moved and had their being and had their property by grace of powers elsewhere than in this country, and who were genuinely dismayed at the withdrawal of those powers; and while it was wrong, perhaps, to take them over-seriously, it would have been equally wrong by any act of their to add to those fear. It was in that spirit, and in that spirit only, that the Government, so far as they were concerned, would definitely refuse to embody in the Constitution any amendment such as that proposed by the Irish Labour Party. This debate highlights during this period the pro-Treaty government's firm opposition to anything that may have been construed as overtly radical.[95]

An article titled "New Plan Outlined by Anti-Treaty Leaders", published in the '*Southern Star*' on Saturday, 30 September 1922, set out what it claimed was the new political and social programme of the Republican, or anti-Treaty, side in the Irish Civil War. The piece opened by stating that the Government's Publicity Department had issued a statement summarising this "programme," which had been drafted by prominent anti-Treaty leaders, including Liam Mellows and Piaras Béaslaí. The '*Southern Star*,' a staunchly pro-Free State paper, treated the document with deep scepticism, presenting it as an effort by the Republican leaders to reframe their rebellion in political terms and to cloak their campaign in the language of social reform. The newspaper portrayed the move as a calculated propaganda exercise designed to win the sympathy of Irish labourers and small farmers who they claimed had otherwise remained largely neutral or unsympathetic to the anti-Treaty cause. According to the article, the anti-Treaty programme, issued at the end of August 1922, claimed to set out a new "Republican Policy and Plan of Campaign" which would combine political, economic, and social reform with the

[95] *Dáil Éireann debate - Monday, 25 Sep 1922 - Vol. 1 No. 11*

military struggle to restore the Irish Republic. It was said to be based on the "Declaration of Independence" of 1919, which the signatories of the plan declared to be the only legitimate foundation of Irish sovereignty. They asserted that the Dáil and Government established under the Anglo-Irish Treaty were "British creations," and that the only lawful authority in Ireland remained that of the Republic proclaimed in 1916 and reaffirmed in 1919. The new plan therefore demanded that the Free State be regarded as a usurpation, and it called upon all Irishmen and women to refuse recognition of its laws, taxes, and institutions.

The '*Southern Star*' summarised the document's contents in some detail, emphasising its social and economic ambitions. The anti-Treaty leaders argued that Ireland's independence could not be achieved or maintained without economic justice and that the Republic must be built on the foundation of the workers and small farmers. The programme declared that the new Ireland would be organised on a co-operative basis, both industrially and agriculturally, so that the wealth of the country would serve the people as a whole rather than a capitalist minority. It called for the nationalisation of banks, transport, and major industries, and for profits to be directed toward public benefit. It also called for sweeping land reform and the redistribution of large estates, along with taxation on wealth to fund social improvement. The '*Southern Star*' noted the use of such phrases as "abolition of exploitation" and "control of the means of production," which it described as language "borrowed from the vocabulary of Bolshevism." The paper claimed that the plan was an attempt to "capture Irish labour" by adopting the rhetoric of socialism, and that it represented a cynical effort to give a revolutionary gloss to what was in reality a campaign of armed insurrection.

The programme further stated that the Free State represented not freedom, but a continuation of British imperialism under another name. The anti-Treaty leaders contended that the Treaty had not given Ireland true independence, but had tied it permanently to the British Empire through the oath, the Governor-General, and other symbols of subjection. It argued that the Irish people, deceived by these appearances, were

being turned into mere instruments of British policy. The new Republican policy, it claimed, would not only destroy the Treaty settlement, but would establish an entirely new social order based on justice, equality, and Irish control of Ireland's resources. The '*Southern Star*' mocked this as an attempt to "turn defeat into doctrine," suggesting that the anti-Treaty forces, unable to win militarily, were seeking to justify their campaign by appealing to discontent among workers and peasants.

The article described in detail the sections of the programme dealing with labour and employment. The anti-Treaty leaders promised that under their Republic, Irish workers would have full rights of organisation, better wages, and secure employment. It proposed a system of workers' and farmers' councils to manage local industries and agriculture. The newspaper observed that these ideas were framed in a way designed to appeal to the trade unions and the Irish Labour Party, but it dismissed them as impractical and dangerous, arguing that they would destroy private enterprise and lead to economic chaos. It accused the Republican leaders of hypocrisy, noting that their guerrilla campaign was destroying railways, factories, and infrastructure even as they claimed to be defending Irish industry and labour. The programme also sought to give an international dimension to the anti-Treaty struggle. It declared that Ireland's fight for independence was part of a wider global war against imperialism, linking the Irish Republic with the struggles of nations such as India, Egypt, and South Africa. It claimed that the Irish people must support the overthrow of imperial domination wherever it existed, and that the success of the Irish Republic would strike a blow against British rule across the world. The '*Southern Star*' presented this as a hollow attempt to make the anti-Treaty movement appear part of a great international cause, while in fact, it argued, the Republicans were merely wrecking their own country. The paper noted that the document spoke of solidarity with "the world's oppressed peoples," but it contended that the anti-Treaty side's destructive tactics and disregard for Irish lives made such claims absurd.

The Republican leaders had also tried to assure readers that their movement was not anti-religious. The programme had explicitly denied any connection aligned with "atheistic communism" and affirmed that the Republic would guarantee full religious freedom. It maintained that the social measures it proposed were consistent with Christian principles of justice. The '*Southern Star*,' however, treated this as an opportunistic gesture aimed at countering growing public suspicion that the anti-Treaty movement had been influenced by Soviet ideas. The paper argued that, despite these denials, the plan's economic theories and class-based language betrayed "the mark of Moscow."

The article went on to criticise the section of the Republican plan dealing with governance and administration. The anti-Treaty leaders stated that they would revive the Dáil established in 1919 and that this Dáil would act as the legitimate parliament of Ireland, with the Army of the Republic as its executive force. They claimed that the Republican Government would remain in existence until the people could elect representatives under the "true Republic." The '*Southern Star*' ridiculed this as political fantasy, asserting that the anti-Treaty leaders were trying to govern a country they were simultaneously destroying. It accused them of seeking to maintain a perpetual state of revolution in order to preserve their own authority. The piece also reported that the anti-Treaty plan included proposals for a future "Republican Constitution," which would codify the social and economic principles outlined in the programme. It called for the extension of voting rights to all adults and for the direct participation of workers in local and national administration. The '*Southern Star*' warned that such measures would lead to the "confiscation of property and the destruction of order." It further pointed out that the document's repeated emphasis on "the rights of the workers" and "the duty of the citizen to the State" mirrored Communist and syndicalist doctrines being propagated in Europe at the time. In its concluding commentary, the '*Southern Star*' argued that the so-called "new plan" was not a genuine political programme but a desperate effort by the anti-Treaty leaders to disguise their defeat. It maintained that

the anti-Treaty movement was attempting to rebrand itself as a social revolution after having failed to sustain a national one. The paper accused them of exploiting the poverty and frustration of the people, using fine phrases about justice and equality to conceal the reality of a campaign that was destroying lives and property. It had warned that if the Republicans were ever to implement their programme, Ireland would face not independence but "anarchy and ruin."

The article therefore presented the Republican plan as a mixture of idealism, opportunism, and subversion, written to appeal to disillusioned workers and farmers but containing the seeds of economic collapse and social disorder. The '*Southern Star*' saw it as another example of the anti-Treaty movement's alliance with revolutionary ideas, and it sought to rally its readers behind the Free State by portraying the government as the only safeguard of stability, property, and civilisation. Through its detailed and dismissive analysis, the newspaper depicted the anti-Treaty leaders as not merely rebels against the state but as political adventurers seeking to impose what they described as an alien ideology on Ireland, under the guise of patriotism.[96]

On the same date, the '*Workers' Republic*' newspaper sarcastically claimed that, during the previous week, the Free State Provisional Government unintentionally rendered what it called its first and only real service to the Irish people. According to the paper, the Government need only "die a natural death" for its usefulness to be complete. The service in question, the newspaper asserted, was the wide publication of documents written by Commandant-General Liam Mellows - captured after the fall of the Four Courts - in which he urged his fellow Republicans to fully adopt the programme first set out in the '*Workers' Republic*.' The paper stated that, for readers' convenience, it was reproducing that programme, which included:

- State ownership and control of all heavy industries for the public good.

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[96] *Southern Star 30/9/1922*

- Full State ownership of all transport systems - railways, canals, shipping, and so forth.
- State control of all banking.
- Confiscation of large ranches and estates without compensation to the aristocracy, followed by their distribution among landless farmers and agricultural labourers, under elected Joint Councils of both groups.
- Abolition of all tenures and debts, whether to private owners or to the State.
- Introduction of an eight-hour working day across all sectors.
- Control of workshop conditions by a Joint Council representing workers, relevant trade unions, and the State.
- Municipalisation of all public services - trams, light, heat, water - with free access for workers.
- Compulsory rationing of all available housing and the abolition of rents.
- Full maintenance for the unemployed at standard trade union rates until work at those same rates is secured.
- Universal arming of workers, urban and rural, in defence of their rights.

The newspaper noted that, alongside Mellows's documents, the Provisional Government had issued a lengthy statement in the Irish Independent - three tightly printed columns - intended, the paper claimed, to discredit the Republican cause. The Government had described Mellows as "one of the real leaders of the Anti-Treaty Party" and the '*Workers' Republic*' as "the organ of a small number of persons in Dublin known as the Communist Party". The article responded that both statements were correct: Mellows was indeed a leading anti-Treaty figure, and the Communist Party was small - partly because the Government had imprisoned many of its members. Nevertheless, the paper maintained that it was gaining support and mockingly thanked Messrs. Cosgrave and colleagues for the free publicity. It joked that the Government had solved its funding difficulties by spreading its programme nationwide through the capitalist press, although the surprise had nearly caused a fatal choking incident over breakfast.

Observing the usual journalistic etiquette of exchanging publicity, the paper urged its readers to consult the Irish Independent of 22 September 1922, adding humour about matching the space allocated in future. The paper insisted that, thanks to the Provisional Government, it might be small but was certainly no longer obscure. Turning to the Mellows documents themselves, the '*Workers' Republic*' held that they revealed the hard logic of events pushing the best Irish Republican Army guerrilla officers towards the explicitly socialist/communist positions of Connolly and Larkin. Mellows argued that a Provisional Republican Government should be formed immediately - independent of debates about the Dáil - even if it could only function in a limited fashion. He warned that the Provisional Government and the press were trying to portray the next Dáil as the provisional parliament mandated by the Treaty. Should the Dáil fail to assert its status as the Government of the Republic, then, he argued, the need for a pro-Republican government would be urgent.

Mellows further stated that the social and democratic programme adopted with the Declaration of Independence in January 1919 had to be made concrete. This did not require Republicans to change their outlook, he maintained; the principles were already embedded in Republican policy. He proposed interpreting them along the lines previously printed in the '*Workers' Republic*.'

On land policy, Mellows emphasised that the IRA Executive/ Council had already advanced a plan for confiscating and redistributing demesnes and ranches, largely devised by P.J.R., with others contributing. He suggested publishing this scheme, particularly given what he described as the unprincipled behaviour of the Labour Party and the plight of landless and homeless Irish Republican fighters. Keeping Irish labour aligned with the Republic, he argued, was essential, as it might be the greatest force on their side. He criticised leaders such as Johnson, O'Brien, and O'Shannon, recalling that during their visit to the Four Courts they had remarked that the Dáil had done nothing to implement its own democratic programme.

Mellows contended that commercial interests - moneyed men and "gombeen-men" - supported the Treaty because it meant Empire and England. Returning to Tone, he insisted that Republicans must rely on "the men of no property", who were never with the status-quo interests and would never be until the Republic triumphed. Republicans, he argued, must therefore base their appeal on the needs of those who had always borne Ireland's struggle. His suggested propaganda outlined:

> (a) a clear explanation of imperialism, the nature and maintenance of the British Empire (including the Free State as a colonial entity), and the consequences for Ireland of either accepting or rejecting imperialism;
> (b) promote demonstrations of the Republic's real achievements - its courts, land settlements, decrees, and the extensive work recorded in Republican bulletins.

A third document, dated 11 September 1922, warned that recent events had made his earlier proposals imperative. Since the Free State had effectively convened the Provisional Parliament rather than the Third Dáil, Mellows asked where the Government of the Republic now stood. Republicans, he insisted, needed a rallying centre. With unemployment acute, starvation looming, and the official Labour movement - he claimed - "deserting the people for the fleshpots of Empire", he urged Republicans to use the crisis to strengthen the Republic. The Free State's stance towards striking postal workers, he maintained, showed its anti-worker orientation. In his words: "Free State - Capitalism and Industrialism - British Empire. Republic - Workers - Labour."

According to the '*Workers' Republic*,' the Provisional Government hoped to discredit Republicans by invoking the spectre of Communism or revolution. But the paper insisted that workers and peasants could no longer be frightened by such rhetoric, especially as the Free State openly represented the dictatorship of capitalists, employers, and large farmers.

The only effective counter, the paper asserted, was for Republicans to declare openly for workers, peasants, small shopkeepers, and small farmers - to embrace the class struggle.

While Mellows's documents suggested he had not fully grasped all implications, the newspaper argued that he was clearly moving in the right direction. His colleagues, it stated, must learn from this and adopt the entire programme without delay. Only the full programme, implemented in its entirety, could rally the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses to the Republican side. The paper concluded with a call to action: the moment belonged to the Republicans - if they chose to seize it.[97]

As noted in '*The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*,' Liam Mellows' writings while imprisoned in Mountjoy were quickly denounced as communist propaganda by various anti-IRA sectors of Irish society, and they were brought to the attention of the Irish bishops in Maynooth, who formally added the Irish Catholic Church's condemnation.[98]

At the turn of November 1922, an article in the '*Workers Republic*' argued that, despite the chaos of the Irish Civil War, the Irish Republic still had the capacity to survive, while the Free State was portrayed as a collapsing, unpopular regime propped up by repression. The piece noted that the Free State government had been able to collect only a fraction of its taxes, that more men were in arms against it than had ever fought the British, and that it had been forced to impose martial law and curfews - measures likened to British military rule. It mocked the claim that the Free State was a democratic government, asking how it could be so when it could not function through ordinary civil institutions. By contrast, the Republicans, it said, had convened a secret Dáil of representatives committed to maintaining the Republic, supported by the I.R.A.. The article argued that the

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[97] *Workers' Republic 30/9/1922*

[98] *Boyce, D.G. (1988). 'The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923.' MacMillan Education.*

Republic could function even under siege, just as it had during "the British Terror," because it retained the sympathy and backing of the Irish working-class. However, it contended that this sympathy would not be enough unless the Republican movement decisively adopted a definite social programme and took the lead in workers' struggles against industrial tyranny. Only by aligning the fight for national independence with the class struggle could the Republic become a true government of the people. The article concluded that when the armed workers of the I.R.A. joined forces with the industrial workers - "the soldiers of the class war" - Ireland would possess a power far greater than the "moribund Free State" could resist.[99]

In mid-November 1922, Roddy Connolly, a hardline socialist republican and son of executed 1916 leader James Connolly - presented in an article for the '*Workers Republic*' a detailed and partisan interpretation of events following the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. His analysis portrayed the Treaty settlement as a betrayal of the Irish Republic proclaimed in 1916 and sustained by the revolutionary forces of 1919–1921. Connolly recounted that after the Treaty had been approved by the Dáil, a National Convention of the Sinn Féin Party had been held on 21 February 1922 to decide the fate of the party's organisation and funds. Although divided between the Republican and pro-Treaty factions, both had attended. According to Connolly, the debates merely repeated those that had taken place in the Dáil: the majority opposed the Treaty, a fact even Michael Collins had reportedly admitted. Yet, he argued, a compromise engineered by the Free Staters and the unity-seeking tactics of Éamon de Valera had led to an outcome favourable to the pro-Treaty side. The Dáil would continue as the Republic's Assembly, Sinn Féin would remain intact with equal representation, and elections would be postponed until the Free State Constitution was ready. Connolly interpreted this as a Free State tactical victory achieved through Republican indecision. It had allowed the pro-Treaty forces crucial time to consolidate power and prepare for what he regarded as a counter-

[99] *Workers' Republic 4/11/1922*

revolutionary state. Connolly asserted that although official unity had been maintained, many within the I.R.A. had realised that the Republican cause was being undermined. The army, he claimed, had remained overwhelmingly Republican and had prepared for armed resistance once it had become clear that the Treaty settlement had rendered unity impossible. He cited Cathal Brugha's speech at New Ross in March 1922 as a pivotal moment, expressing the disillusionment of those who had fought for independence. Brugha had warned that those who had sacrificed for Ireland would not quietly accept British rule "imposed by the votes of people who have made no sacrifices," and that they would resist "in a much more strenuous way than by merely registering votes." Connolly then described the proclamation by Seamus Robinson, Commandant-General of the Tipperary Brigade, which had declared the Free State "illegal and immoral" and had called upon the army to resist its establishment - a statement Connolly treated as evidence of the I.R.A.'s moral and revolutionary legitimacy.

Connolly recounted that the first armed confrontation had arisen when the pro-Treaty General Headquarters had attempted to remove a Republican commander from Limerick. Republican forces had seized the city's barracks and hotels, while loyalist troops had been brought in. A compromise brokered by the Lord Mayor had restored a fragile peace. Connolly argued that had the Republicans pressed their advantage, they might have decisively altered the balance of power, but again, political leaders had prioritised "unity" and "peace." He criticised de Valera's vacillation, noting that though he had sought to avoid civil war, he had used the threat of it to extract concessions from the Free Staters. De Valera's speech at Thurles on 17 March 1922 - warning that Irishmen might soon have to fight their own countrymen for freedom - was described by Connolly as prophetic. He suggested that de Valera himself had had no idea at the time how literally his words would come true. By late March 1922, Connolly wrote, the I.R.A. had formally split from the Dáil government. Although a majority of the army's General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) had supported the Treaty, the minority had demanded that the Minister of

Defence, Richard Mulcahy, call a full convention to decide the army's stance. When it had become apparent that the army overwhelmingly opposed the Treaty, the Free State Cabinet had declared the planned convention illegal. Connolly interpreted this as proof that the Free State feared the revolutionary army that had fought the British Crown. Nevertheless, the I.R.A. had proceeded. Around 80 per cent of the army had sent delegates to Dublin, protected by the Dublin Brigade, and had held their convention. Connolly described its outcomes as decisive:

- The Dáil had supposedly attempted to subvert the Republic, releasing the army from allegiance to it.
- The I.R.A. would continue to fight for the Republic under an independent Executive Council.
- Measures had been taken to prevent sectarian pogroms in Belfast and to reinstate the boycott of Belfast-made goods, which the Free State had abandoned.
- When the '*Freemans Journal*' had portrayed reports about the convention in a positive light, Connolly claimed that the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. had retaliated by destroying the paper's printing works, interpreting it as a symbolic act against Free State propaganda.

Roddy Connolly's article situated the Treaty split as part of a wider class and ideological struggle, not merely a nationalist dispute. He portrayed the Free State as the instrument of bourgeois compromise, sustained by cautious politicians, while the I.R.A. represented the continuing revolutionary will of the people. Connolly's analysis reflected the Marxist and anti-imperialist tradition inherited from his father, James Connolly. He presented the Republican side as the true defender of the workers' republic envisaged in 1916, and the Treaty as a betrayal that had subordinated Irish freedom to British imperial and capitalist interests. For Roddy Connolly, the events of early 1922 illustrated not just a civil war, but the collapse of revolutionary unity under pressure from compromise, constitutionalism, and class interests - a

moment when a Republic of Labour and a Republic of Ireland had tragically diverged.[100]

In early August 1923, the pro-Republican newspaper '*Éire - The Irish Nation*' ran an advert for the '*The Workers' Dreadnought*' publication, which claimed that it stood for "free industrial Communism" and was "always a champion of Red Republican Ireland."[101]

At a Cumann na Gaedhael general election rally at Mallow in August 1923, Mr. Michael J. Hennessy TD remarked that he sought a Government that would be firm and gain widespread respect. He believed that the incumbent Free State government would protect private property rights and "not allow their homes to be violated." Hennessy quipped that Ireland had been plagued by "'Devalerism' and Communism," a combination that had done "untold harm to the country and its interests." However, he remarked that the new Free State had "raised a National Army to protect people's homes and property and liberties." Attacking the upsurge in labour unrest and guerrilla activity, he declared that they did not desire in the country "people who went around with the torch and petrol cans," declaring that people found "guilty of the crimes committed in that way" were entitled to be "flogged." At this point, jeering, followed by a scuffle, broke out. The Very Rev Chairman tried to bring the crowd to order, but a group of Anti-Treaty-ites and trade union activists clashed with the Civic Guard (police). Hennessy continued by remarking that there were good as well as bad employers in the country, and that he had done more for the workers than some of those who shouted their support for the same cause. Furthermore, he quipped:

> "*If the workers allow themselves to be dragged by the heels of Communism, they will be walking into an abyss with their eyes open*."

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[100] *Workers' Republic 18/11/1922*

[101] *Éire - The Irish Nation 4/8/1923*

Speaking next, Mr. J.J. Walsh (the Postmaster-General) declared that in the Free State, there was a lower rate of unemployment than there had been at the commencement of the administration, and that the Government had tried to strike a balance between the interests of employers and employees. He claimed that he did not see it as his "duty to down the workingman" and that he was a "workingman" himself. Additionally, he declared that it was:

> "*The duty of an enlightened government to see that the inhabitants of the district, positively agricultural inhabitants, got the utmost opportunity of making a fair and square livelihood*."

Walsh asserted that the new Free State administration could do this.[102]

The '*Ulster Herald*' reported that at a general election meeting in Co. Galway, held during August 1923, Mrs. T. (Muriel) MacSwiney, on behalf of the abstentionist Sinn Féin campaign, remarked that she believed in establishing a Workers' Republic.[103] It may be worth noting that, as per an '*Irish Examiner*' feature in 2022, Muriel MacSwiney (née Murphy) had a radical path. Born into a Cork City 'merchant prince' brewing family that was very wealthy, her parents were pro-Unionist. Opinionated and highly intelligent, Muriel was deeply engaged with radical, nationalist, and socialist writings, and by around 1915 she had become actively involved in social movements and the fight for Irish independence. Known for her strong social conscience, she once remarked:

> *"There is a great deal of poverty in Ireland, especially in Cork […] As I grew older, I realised that real change could only come through government […] If we had our own government, we could do something; […] and I came to see that*

[102] *Cork Examiner 6/8/1923*

[103] *Ulster Herald 18/8/1923*

England was merely a thief with no right to be here at all."

Notoriously opposed to the-then leadership of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Muriel remained a committed communist throughout her life. After the Civil War, she joined the Irish Worker League as well as the Communist Parties of Germany, France, and Great Britain. Later, she formed a relationship with Pierre Kaan, a Jew and a leader in the French Anti-Nazi Resistance, with whom she had a child. Kaan was imprisoned and died in Buchenwald concentration camp just weeks before the end of the Second World War. In 1922, at the height of the Civil War, she had also gone on a Republican fundraising trip to New York City, and lobbied for the release of the far-left trade union leader, Jim Larkin.[104] [105]

A commentary warning of the supposed dangers of the League of Nations, published in the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper on 8 September 1923, argued that nothing had been more significant than the eagerness of the Free State authorities to join immediately the League of Nations. It was presented as evidence that their true source of inspiration had been British imperialism. The article stated that, simultaneously with federalism after 1865 in the United States, there had grown up the grouping of similar industries into huge trusts. Oil, railways, meat, and wheat had all gradually come under the control of "small rings of abnormally wealthy men." Their agents, it claimed, had been able to override the people's government, and their limitless credit had enabled them to ruin or absorb the small, independent producer. According to the commentary, the financiers and big businessmen who had held so large a share in both the profits and the governing of the British Empire had not been slow to see the secret of the success of the American trusts. It argued that if only the states of Europe could have been transformed into one huge, unwieldy federation, with a European Washington at Geneva,

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[104] *Irish Examiner 29/3/2022*

[105] *'Muriel MacSwiney.' Dictionary of Irish Biography (2009).*

their sturdy sense of nationality, their individual pride, and their separate personality would all gradually have been merged into a vague patriotism. Frontiers, it said, would have faded into mere boundaries, and those commercial groups already developed could then have driven all competitors out of the open field. England, with its enormous coal supplies, would thereby have dominated the world by gaining control of this combination of commercial and industrial trusts. The "new aristocracy" of commercial magnates, the article warned, would have established itself securely as a kind of international ascendancy party, while the peoples, though gradually becoming free, would have been "ground down into a propertyless proletariat." Such an ideal, the '*Sinn Féin*' commentary declared, had been as utterly un-Irish, and as foreign to the kindly Gael, as any concept of the human mind could have been. The article further linked this with the desire to impede the growth of independent industries in an awakening Ireland, conscious of its separate nationhood and its obvious unity if left undisturbed by alien and usurping domination. The partition of Ireland by an arbitrary and senseless borderline, in order to attempt to create two kinds of Irish nationality, was presented as clearly the product of the same callous and calculating British imperialism.[106]

On 22 September 1923, a material argument in favour of the Free State was asserted by the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commentary to be very weak. The commentary stated that the claim that "The Treaty would make the Irish people prosperous and consequently give them the material strength to wrest their freedom from Britain" was wrong. According to the commentary, the Treaty was an Imperial instrument - that is to say, a capitalistic instrument - and it asserted that national justice had been abandoned in its acceptance. It further contended that social justice would fare just as badly under it. The commentary asserted that already £20,000,000 had been squandered in building up the Empire in Ireland, while at the same time it was claimed that "funds were not available" when a national housing scheme was urged. This, the commentary maintained, was an indication of the

[106] *Sinn Féin 8/9/1923*

economic status that would be fostered by the Treaty. It asserted that this status would be a capitalist one - that is, the prosperity of a few at the expense of the many. Therefore, the commentary argued that even if, as it itself doubted, material wealth were to flow from the Treaty, it would flow into the pockets of the few and not of the many. It claimed that Ireland would have had a slightly larger minority of wealthy families and a slightly smaller majority of "the people with no property." The commentary then addressed the allegation that those enriched by the Treaty would use their economic power to secure a Republic, asserting that this was contrary to all historical experience in Ireland.

According to the commentary, it had been the native clans, and not the possessing classes, who had kept up the revolt against British domination prior to the Penal times. It asserted that it was the possessing classes who had kept Ireland in subjection for Britain during the Penal era. The commentary cited Tone's exchange with Hoche, asserting that when Hoche wondered whether "the men of property wished for a revolution in Ireland," Tone had replied, "Most certainly not," and had advised him to "reckon on all the opposition that class could give him." Later, the commentary noted, Tone had put the matter more concisely: "Merchants make bad revolutionaries."

The commentary further asserted that it had been the propertied classes who had opposed Tone and passed the Union, and that from that day to the present they had been either the "English garrison" within Ireland or the "Constitutionalists" who opposed independence. It asked rhetorically what officer listening had had a rich man in his column during the Tan War, and asserted that none had, claiming that the Auxiliary had absorbed that class. The commentary stated that British War Loans had raised £5,000,000 in Ireland, while the Republican Loan had raised barely £3,000,000. While acknowledging, as it put it, that there were exceptions to every general fact, the commentary cited Erskine Childers as one of the propertied classes, adding that the radicalised Irish people had killed him. From this, it asserted that if the Treaty were to give Ireland more

rich men, it would simply mean a bigger barrier than before raised across the road to freedom.

The commentary further claimed that the Free Staters themselves admitted that the final freeing of Ireland would require an armed movement, and asserted that they admitted this by arguing that because the Treaty meant the arming of Irishmen, it would mean the freeing of Ireland. However, the commentary asked where in the whole world the propertied classes had ever been on the side of armed revolution, asserting that it was against their nature to be. It asserted that a man who owned a well-furnished house liked to see a policeman in his street, not out of affection for any particular policeman, but for what they symbolised - established government. According to the commentary, a man of property liked his property to be protected, and during a revolution his property was not very safe. It contended that such a man could not fairly be expected to love revolution or to organise it. The commentary imagined that if any of those enriched by the Treaty were to invest their capital in Irish railway stock, they would not have been very anxious for the guerrilla war through which it asserted that the Republic would eventually come. Nor, it argued, was it reasonable to expect that a man who had surrendered the Republic rather than endanger lives would, once materially benefited by that surrender, engage in a revolution in which lives and property would almost certainly be lost. In conclusion, the Sinn Féin newspaper commentary asserted that the Treaty would not enrich the people as such, but principally the possessing class. It argued that the possessing class was the natural enemy of revolution, and that Irish liberty could come only by revolution. Consequently, it claimed that the material prosperity to which the Treaty would lead would strengthen not the cause of liberty, but the cause opposed to it.[107]

The '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper stated on 16 January 1924 that at the time of the Treaty, the British Labour Party (with the exception of fringe sections) had accepted and acclaimed its signing, but, the paper continued, it now recognised that a

[107] *Sinn Féin 22/9/1923*

British Labour government, having come to power for the first time and being opposed by the two greatest capitalist political parties in England, would have found itself increasingly obliged to rely for its strength on forces that were ultimately anti-imperial. Since imperialism, it argued, represented the most extreme form of tyrannical capitalism, such a government would, in its view, have been driven by the logic of circumstances to depend upon the application of the principles of freedom and justice in order to succeed.[108]

On 26 January 1924, the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper wrote that, at a time of increasing unemployment, scandalously high prices, constant and natural labour unrest, widespread rural distress, and industrial chaos, the greatest economic and financial handicap facing Ireland had been the existence of a so-called "Government" whose members' minds were, it claimed, under foreign domination. According to the paper, these men had devoted their time and spent public money in furthering British Crown rather than Irish interests. Every department under their control, it argued, though highly staffed and highly paid, had been engaged in strengthening Britain's hold over Ireland instead of advancing Irish interests in every sphere of national life. From the large army and secret service created to keep Ireland within the Empire, to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which it said had spent vast sums at home and abroad on anti-Irish propaganda, the paper maintained that Pro-Treaty ministers had continued old British policies. Their attendance at the League of Nations and their acquiescence in the decisions of the Imperial Conference were presented as further evidence that they were maintaining Ireland at a level of economic weakness in order to undermine demands for independence and to protect pro-British vested interests. While these men remained in control, the paper asserted, the country's sole hope of economic improvement rested in the Republican determination to organise and educate the people in the struggle for national and economic freedom.

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[108] *Sinn Féin 16/1/1924*

Under the heading 'The High Cost of Living,' the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper gave what it described as a striking example of the indifference of Pro-Treaty leaders, and of Labour leaders who supported British imperialism, to the welfare of the people. It complained of the complete absence of effective action to deal with high prices. Commissions of inquiry, it said, had been appointed but denied even the most basic powers of investigation, coming and going without results. Meanwhile, the Pro-Treaty press, according to the paper, had carried on a steady flow of propaganda designed to suggest a paternal concern for the people, even though official proposals were ineffective and inept. The paper noted that "Food Control" had been proposed and then abandoned, and it ridiculed a Pro-Treaty minister who had merely urged shopkeepers to display their prices. It asked why none of these leaders had exposed the powerful combine which, in its view, controlled prices and, with the support of the Pro-Treaty authorities, had created a system in which producers were forced to sell below cost while consumers paid more than people in London. The profiteers, the paper alleged, were allowed to ruin both producer and consumer because they supported the Pro-Treaty regime. In this way, it argued, they sustained conditions that poisoned relations between agricultural and industrial employers and workers. Throughout the economic disorder from which the people suffered, the profiteer was portrayed as the chief support of British imperialism and of the harsher forms of capitalism that, the paper maintained, had long been imposed on Ireland by Great Britain.

In outlining what it called a 'Republican Economic Policy,' the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper stated that this was only one aspect of a wider economic problem being studied by Republicans. It explained that Republicans had moved slowly because, once they undertook a task, there could be no turning back. The proper application of their principles of freedom and justice to economic life, it insisted, had to be carefully and deeply examined. Although some people demanded the immediate adoption of an economic programme and even treated these matters as party politics, the paper replied that the future happiness and fulfilment of

the Irish people depended on the seriousness with which such a task was undertaken. The Republican government, it said, had aimed to build not merely for a few years but for generations to come, and had been obliged to work under immense difficulties. Under the heading 'The People's Responsibility,' the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper argued that the nation had to set its own house in order. It had to unite and free itself from British domination, overcome internal tyranny, and in economic life bring its classes together rather than drive them apart. This, it maintained, required education for both employers and workers alike. The whole people had to educate itself and avoid slavish imitation of other nations. No lasting reform, the paper claimed, was possible without intelligence and spiritual faith. As long as people's minds were set against one another and Christian principles were not applied in human relations, forces of destruction would remain active even where forces of righteousness existed. The paper concluded that it was not advocating anything impossible. It maintained that these ideas represented simple common sense, and that wherever the spirit of co-operation and goodwill had been put into motion, seemingly impossible tasks had been made achievable. It expressed the belief that the revival of the old Gaelic spirit, once it again permeated the national consciousness, would create in Ireland a civilisation worthy of the name.[109]

In February 1924, a '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commentary, offered a sympathetic view towards Soviet Russia, and asserted that the chief observation to be made about Russia was that all industry and transport, as well as import and export, had been in the hands of the State. According to the commentary, the result had not been all that one might have hoped for, because in Russia, as elsewhere, the peasants had suffered greatly. The commentary claimed that imports and domestic needs had been sacrificed to exports in order to establish the name of Russian trade in the world and to overcome British and other boycotts. It asserted that, as a consequence, the products of industry had not been sold: peasants, faced with poor markets and the seasonal decline of

[109] *Sinn Féin 26/1/1924*

agriculture, had not been able to purchase them, and warehouses had become full of unsold industrial goods. The commentary further asserted that grain had been the chief export, and that Germany had been Russia's greatest customer. It concluded by claiming that these conditions were mainly the result of "Imperial and allied capitalist interference."[110]

In late February 1924, Sean T. O'Kelly argued that it had been the duty of the progressive labour leader to see that his class - artisan and skilled workers - suffered in no way from defective education. He maintained that the employed, too, would find it greatly to their advantage to encourage and provide generous facilities for the better general and technical education of their apprentices. He asserted that education produced a better-equipped, more expert, and more disciplined artisan, as well as a more self-reliant, self-respecting man and citizen. He recalled that the attempts he had observed, in his own time, by Dublin workmen to found co-operative trading societies in connection with their trades or industries had failed because of this lack of education, and more particularly, of technical education - or what was commonly described as business training - in the men charged with the direction and management of these ventures. He argued that no man could make a success of a concern unless he had been reared to it, as the farmers said, or had been trained in its methods of organisation, its technicalities, and possessed an intelligence sufficiently developed to meet unexpected difficulties. The combination of being reared to an art or craft and trained technically to it at the same time, he believed, produced the best worker in all grades of society and carried with it a tradition of good work, handed down from generation to generation for increasingly better results. O'Kelly contended that, when founding co-operative enterprises, trades unionists should select for the position of director or manager, from amongst themselves if possible, a man who had received a good general education, good technical training in the trade or industry concerned, and who had been reared to it or had gained lengthy

[110] *Sinn Féin 9/2/1924*

experience in similar undertakings. Once they had selected their manager, he advised, they should give him their confidence and accept loyally his decisions and regulations. He suggested that it would have repaid the workers of Ireland to select from among their members a small group of trained minds to devote serious thought to this subject. This group should have been made experts in education in general and should have studied the needs of Irish education in particular. He recommended that they then be sent, for a year or two, to Germany, France, Italy, and Denmark, and later to America and Australia, to study the worker's condition in these countries and, particularly, to take note of and report to the Irish worker on the development of education in regard to the working classes in all these nations. He concluded by noting that he would in future describe some successful enterprises, carried out on co-operative lines, in Italy and elsewhere.[111]

Following-up on this topic on 1 March 1924, Sean T. O'Kelly wrote that the study of the development of the German and Italian trade unions was particularly to be recommended. He expressed his certainty that such a group of cultured Irish workers would have found much of deep interest and great value in tracing the development of the workers' cultural movements in these two countries, and that the periodical reports of their investigations would have had a great effect in broadening outlooks and raising the educational ideals of the younger and more progressive elements among the workers at home. He observed that in Germany, before the war, the unions had by no means confined themselves to obtaining increased wages and shorter hours for their members; they had also endeavoured, and indeed succeeded, in raising the moral and intellectual status of their members. Those who had come into contact with the leaders of such unions, he said, must have noticed the high moral and intellectual development of the German worker before the war. The ideas of duty and discipline, he noted, had been strongly inculcated. The German unions had not stood for the scamping of work by their members any more than they had tolerated oppressive treatment of the

[111] *Sinn Féin 23/2/1924*

worker by the employer. O'Kelly pointed out that many years earlier the General Commission of the Labour Unions in Berlin - a body corresponding to the French C.G.T. - had founded a school where, for several months of the year, young workers were taught the elements of political economy, statistics, and German law as it affected the working man. Courses of study had been laid down for similar school centres throughout the German Empire, and these centres were visited regularly by travelling professors of repute paid by the General Commission. This body, he added, had also organised lecturing tours for the more advanced students. He further noted that even in Germany, where ordinary and technical education stood at a much higher level than in most countries, the labour unions themselves had set out to develop the education of their members by means of evening classes embracing a wide range of subjects, the establishment of well-appointed libraries at the headquarters of labour organisations in all towns and even in small villages, and the holding of artistic and literary reunions and theatrical performances. A year or two before the war, he recalled, a German labour journal had stated that the Metal Workers' Union alone had disbursed close on £50,000 in a single year for educational purposes. The labour-union leaders, through their educational committee, had for many years published an educational review addressed exclusively to young workers, and special curricula had been mapped out for them in all centres. Many years earlier, he added, the Labour Congress of Germany had established a Labour Press which published annually works on scientific subjects written by the best experts and ablest writers in the country, showing the advances being made throughout the world in science, art, and literature. Even novels suitable for workers had from time to time been issued by this press, along with scientific reviews designed to educate workers in developments in their own trades and professions and to keep them in touch with economic and democratic progress throughout the world. Money for this purpose, he noted, had been set aside by the Labour Congress.

Thanks to this sustained educational work, O'Kelly argued, not only had union officials acquired a solid grasp of labour and economic questions, but the rank and file of the workers had been given an intellectual equipment far superior, for example, to that of French or English artisans. He maintained that through steady educational and cultural development, and through literary activity and family gatherings, the general tone of the workers had been perceptibly elevated. All who in recent years had had an opportunity of studying the German worker at home, he claimed, had been unanimous in their praise of his behaviour. Union training, he said, had borne fruit even in outward conduct. The German artisan dressed well; on leaving the dockyard or workshop he changed his clothes and would not have dreamt of going out without a collar. He treated his wife and children better, in general, than the petty shopkeeper. Through education the tide of drunkenness had been stemmed, and where the union movement was strongest it had been observed that the consumption of beer, so dear to most Germans, had been considerably reduced. This educational movement in Germany, O'Kelly concluded, had become a powerful civilising force that uplifted the worker, sharpened his intelligence, and increased his professional value. He maintained that almost everything that had been said about Germany could equally have been applied to those parts of Italy - particularly in Northern Italy - where the labour movement was strongest. A visit to Milan and Genoa, and to other industrial towns, he believed, would have well repaid any student of shipbuilding. A visit to the Genoa shipyard, owned, controlled, and manned by the workers of that town, would, he said, have been a revelation to most Irishmen. Likewise, to see the great textile industries owned and run by the workers of Milan would have opened the eyes of even the most progressive Irish artisan. A visit to this busy hive of industry, he argued, should have made a Dublin worker blush when considering how miserably Dublin workers had failed in their co-operative enterprises. In considering the future economic development of Ireland, O'Kelly wrote that the Republican Ministers of Economics and of Trade and Labour would have had to give serious thought to the relative positions and balance of power between Capital and Labour.

He believed it was not impossible that, in a fully free and independent Ireland, methods could have been devised by which the friction between these two dominant economic interests might have been avoided. While he did not propose to explore the subject in depth, he suggested to the Republican authorities - and to all those interested in Ireland's economic development and industrial welfare - that they seriously consider methods which had reached their highest development in Germany and had also been adopted, though to a lesser extent, in England. In particular, he referred to the establishment of joint Economic Councils, bodies charged with investigating all problems arising between Capital and Labour and with eliminating strikes and industrial disputes.

He noted that in America, and in Germany during the European war, Arbitration Boards representing workers and employers had been set up to investigate disputes and prevent strikes. After the war, these boards had been abandoned in America, but in Germany employers had found it advantageous to continue them. As a result, in many industries, these boards had gradually developed into alliances which in turn had evolved into Economic Councils representing organised workers and employers' federations. Initially concerned with particular industries, these bodies had in effect become Industrial Parliaments for large groups of industries. They had discussed their own economic and technical problems and had given valuable advice to the government. Over time, these smaller councils had developed into a National Economic Council or Parliament for the whole of Germany, which had secured formal recognition in the German Constitution through a new article expressly authorising its creation. This National Economic or Industrial Parliament, in which workers and employers had enjoyed equal rights and representation, had been entitled to discuss all matters relating to wages, salaries, and conditions of labour, as well as questions concerning the economic progress of the country. It had been composed of members elected from the Provincial Economic Councils, which in turn had been elected from local or area councils. O'Kelly noted that the scheme had not yet been fully worked out in

all its details, the existing National Economic Council being merely provisional. Nevertheless, this provisional council had submitted an organisational scheme to the government, which it was expected would soon be adopted and put into effect. He observed that, in addition to representatives of workers and employers in major industries such as mining, agriculture, metalwork, fisheries, building, shipbuilding, banking, insurance, and transport, generous representation had also been given to consumers, officials, and the liberal professions, while the government itself had separate and direct representation. This council, he added, had possessed the right to initiate legislation in the national parliament.

Although parliament had not been obliged to pass such proposals, nor the government required to support them, O'Kelly believed that legislation coming from so expert a body could not be lightly dismissed. He further noted that, since its establishment, the German government had regularly referred important social legislation to this council for advice and consideration. He concluded that the study of this remarkable economic and social development in Germany would have well repaid intelligent and patriotic labour, Republicans, and all who were interested in Ireland's economic welfare. He believed that the adoption of such a system could have provided a remedy for many of the industrial troubles from which Ireland, like other countries, so often suffered. While he did not suggest that a National Economic Council would have fulfilled all the hopes of Irish workers, he maintained that it would at least have been a powerful instrument for preventing strikes and industrial disputes during the transitional period before the existing industrial system could be overhauled and replaced by one that would give the worker a fair and secure return for a lifetime's labour.[112]

Addressing the Oireachtas on 19 March 1924, Minister for Local Government, Seamus Aloysius Burke TD of the Cumann na nGaedheal party, declared that a short time previously, the nation had been living in times as nearly as

[112] *Sinn Féin 1/3/1924*

possible the exact opposite of normal. He stated that the country had just emerged from a life-and-death struggle of a kind well calculated to test the strength and endurance of a political organism far more powerful and consolidated than that which existed in Ireland at the time. He said that the infant State, of which they had been the curators, had only escaped, as if by a miracle, from being strangled at birth. Those who had stood sponsor for it, he remarked, had been forced to withstand a challenge which, in fury and intensity, had seldom been equalled. Burke explained that this challenge had come from an armed minority consisting of two sections - one seeking the political objective of a paper Republic, and the other pursuing the social objective usually associated with triumph under the most extreme shade of the red flag. Both, he asserted, had been leading the country towards anarchy and chaos, along a path that would have brought about a state of affairs in which revolution, having completed its circle of civil war, anarchy, pestilence and famine, would ultimately have been crushed only by the intervention of one or other of the powers of Western Europe. Those powers, he warned, would never under any circumstances have permitted Ireland to be established as a western outpost of Bolshevik terrorism in Europe. He declared that Ireland had been saved from that fate - from anarchy, from the intervention of a hostile army, and from famine. Yet, he admitted, she had not been saved, and could not have been saved, from much want and suffering - the inevitable consequence of the reckless defiance of political and economic laws witnessed over the previous eighteen months, during which the people had been both spectators and victims. Burke went on to say that this might now be allowed to pass - if, as he put it, the under-mobilised workmen of the Dublin Corporation would allow it to pass. There was, he added, nothing to be gained at that stage by saying “I told you so.” The object then, he concluded, was to strive to return to normal conditions and to do everything in their power to relieve the want and suffering that had followed as a result of what he regarded as a rash rebellion.[113]

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[113] *Dáil Éireann debate - Wednesday, 19 Mar 1924 - Vol. 6 No. 28*

In a March 1924 edition of '*Sinn Féin*,' an article on electrification in the Free State was discussed by Chester A. Arthur. He remarked that such a service should "be owned by the whole people, and used by them at cost price." He asserted that this condition was the most important for people to bear in mind, when the Government of the Free State was considering the advisability of giving the carrying out of the Liffey project to an English corporation, or the Shannon scheme to a German one. It would be better for them, he believed, to have had no electricity at all than to allow this power to fall into the hands of private foreign capitalists or to let the home financiers get hold of it and run it for profit - like the Free State Broadcasters which had been established. Concluding, he remarked that electricity in any hands but their own had the power to enslave them, rather than set them free.[114]

A front page article from the '*Irish Worker*,' dated 19 April 1924, reflected on "the price of patriotism," opining that those who had volunteered in the cause of the IRA and the ICA before it had never obtained a single penny in payment for their services to the Irish cause and the principles of liberty. Rather, they got a stung with a lousy deal by receiving the scaffold (hanging), the firing line, the Gaol (jail), hillside and starvation.[115]

In a June 1924 issue of '*Sinn Féin*,' the newspaper sharply criticised the Irish Free State government's handling of unemployment relief, particularly addressing statements made by W. T. Cosgrave in Leinster House on 20th [month unspecified]. The article portrayed the government's approach as misguided and ineffective. Mr. Cosgrave claimed that the Free State had done more than most European governments to relieve unemployment, citing the recruitment of thousands of men into the Civic Guard and D.M.P., £5 million in compensation payments, £2 million

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[114] *Sinn Féin 29/3/1924*

[115] *Irish Worker 19/4/1924*

spent on roads, £4 million in soldiers' pay and separation allowances, £300,000 for housing, and an upcoming recruitment of 4,000 more soldiers. '*Sinn Féin*' responded with strong criticism, arguing that these measures did little to alleviate genuine unemployment or economic hardship. The newspaper described the expenditure on soldiers and compensation as ineffective and misdirected, noting that the upkeep of the army cost the state roughly £1 per soldier per day, which could have been redirected to productive public works. Road-building projects were labelled a failure, as main routes from Dublin reportedly still contained more potholes than before, and housing schemes were criticised as uneconomic, particularly following Cosgrave's dissolution of Dublin Corporation (city council), which had allegedly undermined prospects for meaningful construction. The article emphasised the persistent poverty in Ireland, particularly in the western regions, where much of the population remained on the brink of starvation. It criticised government ministers, including Mr. Burke, for denying or ignoring the severity of distress, contrasting the lack of action in Merrion Street with the historical responsiveness of Westminster to similar crises. Overall, the newspaper framed the Free State's relief measures as superficial and politically motivated, serving primarily to maintain government control and reward military interests rather than to address the pressing social and economic needs of the population.[116]

An article from '*Sinn Féin*' in November 1924 again attacked the founders of the Free State. It was claimed that, before they had signed the Treaty, those behind the Free State's creation had agreed to recognise the British Government in Ireland. They had, the paper claimed, acknowledged the Partition, a Provisional Government set up by England for 26 Counties, and to become part of it. Clause 17 of the Treaty mades this Crown law. By agreeing to this, they had accepted British Government and British ideals. It was asserted that, the Republican Government, with its Gaelic and democratic machinery, its ideals and programme, was "cast to the wind." From that time, it alleged that they were a part of the

[116] *Sinn Féin 7/6/1924*

machinery of the British Empire - that they had "sold themselves to Imperialism, capitalism and graft." '*Sinn Féin*' claimed that the economic ruin of Ireland was begun. It supposedly paved the way for salaries out of all proportion to the wealth and size of the country for themselves and their "needy friends and supporters was their first care." This, the paper claimed, necessitated the reduction of the wages of the workers they employed. The Postmen struck against this, but were beaten, and the same went on. '*Sinn Féin*' also asserted that they sent contracts for things that are made in Ireland "across to the enemy." Uniform material and mattresses for their army were both "proved" by the secretaries of the various Trades Unions to be coming over from England, while Irish workers "were starving." The article pointed out that "most of the men composing this Junta are Catholics." How, it asked, could they answer the following dictum set out by Pope Leo XIII:

> "*Wage earners, who are undoubtedly among the weak and necessitous, should be specially cared for and protected by the Government*."[117]

It was remarked in a feature by the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper in December 1924 on the topic of unemployment that, in almost every country in Europe, including Italy, Germany and France, all of which suffered so much during the war, there was little or no unemployment because the governments of these countries put the interests of the people first. But under British Imperialism there was immense unemployment, because the governments of all countries ruled or influenced by British finance or British statesmen put the interest of the people last and financial interests first. Under British Imperialism, however, there was immense unemployment, because the British policy (which dominated Ireland) was to put the interest of bankers and financiers first - and to sacrifice the people to "reactionary financial interests." The Free State leaders had frankly admitted that this condition of unemployment must remain. Under pressure of Republican propaganda, it was alleged they had voted a few paltry

[117] *Sinn Féin 15/11/1934*

hundred of thousands not really to abolish unemployment, but as an electioneering advertisement, and a method of doles to certain sections to secure votes. But the problem, or rather the tragedy of unemployment remained, because the Free State leaders dared not call home all the Irish money invested through London in foreign securities or make the necessary demand upon Irish credit. The paper claimed that he Anglo-Irish financiers who placed British financial and political domination first and last were too strong for the Free State leaders, hence the latter were impotent to do their duty by the people, which as President de Valera had laid down, was the duty of any government, namely, to secure employment for the workers. By this test on a vital national matter, the Free State was tried and found wanting.

Dealing with slums, the '*Sinn Féin*' article remarked that there were at least twenty thousand families in Dublin living each in one single room. What, it asked, had the Free State done for these? It had helped in a paltry way the building of a limited number of houses, by legislation and subsidy, houses which those who needed them most would never see. Only the needs of the less poor were met by these, not of the very poor. '*Sinn Féin*' asserted that the slum question would remain untouched because the Free State could not face the real difficulties which consisted of their own reactionary supporters, whose interests, banking and otherwise, would be injured by any radical attempt to command the credit required to build the houses. At the root of their impotence, it claimed, lay the connection with British power. Additionally, it claimed that a new Land Bill had been framed, which once more placed the interests of the landlords and British credit first, which would put the Free State in pawn. In the meantime the only effect of the Land Bill had been to empower the soldiers and police, as in the palmy days of Balfour, to "guard the grazing lands for the landlords and against the people."

In the same issue, contained within the '*Sinn Féin*' prison-diary column, "Leaves from a Prison Diary," the paper recounted how, one night, as the imprisoned diarist (Proinnsias Ó Gallchobhair) had been preparing for bed,

quiet footsteps and a timid knock had sounded at his door. He had risen again, opened the door, and found one of the prisoners from B. III. 4, who handed him a bulky letter. It had come from Liam Mellows and had contained an article on Labour which Mellows had been considering sending out, asking for the diarist's opinion. The diary noted that the article had included many powerful passages. One such passage had argued that Labour had played a tremendous part in the establishment and maintenance of the Republic. Its leaders, it said, had once had it within their power to shape that Republic as they wished and to make it a Workers' and Peasants' Republic. By accepting the Treaty and everything it implied - recognition of the British monarchy, the British Privy Council and British imperialism, the partition of the country, and subservience to British capitalism - they were said to have betrayed not only the Irish Republic, but also the Labour movement in Ireland and the cause of workers and peasants throughout the world. The article had further asserted that it was a fallacy to believe that any kind of Republic could be won through the shackled Free State. It had compared such an attempt to trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and had described the Free State as British-created, British-controlled, and serving British imperial interests, a buffer erected between Britain and the Irish Republic. Under the heading "Controllers of Governments," the diary quoted further sentences which it regarded as especially striking. One of these had declared that if the Irish people did not control Irish industries, transport, money, and the soil of the country, then foreign or domestic capitalists would do so instead, and that whoever controlled a country's wealth and the processes by which wealth was created also controlled its government. Ó Gallchobhair remarks that "Liam can write as forcefully as Lalor when he likes."[118]

In an issue from February 1925, the newspaper '*Sinn Féin*' reported in an article titled "Gifts for Millionaires, Exactions on the Poor", on the introduction of the 1925 Budget in the Southern Irish "Free State" Parliament. The article sharply

[118] *Sinn Féin 20/12/1924*

criticised the fiscal policies of His Majesty's Minister of Finance, highlighting the contrast between taxation on the wealthy and the poor: The Minister of Finance claimed that higher taxation in Ireland, compared to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was justified by the country's poverty. He argued that "the very poorness of the country led to the necessity of higher rates," suggesting that taxpayers should be "grateful for higher rates," even though the yield of taxation per head was significantly lower than in Britain. Estate duties, stamp duties, and income tax in the Irish Free State produced far less revenue per person than in Great Britain, despite nominally higher tax rates. The newspaper pointed to structural reasons for this disparity, emphasising the prevalence of low incomes in Ireland. Census data indicated that 45% of the workforce was engaged in agriculture, with most farms very small - eighty per cent under fifty acres, thirty-one per cent under fifteen acres - and often on poor-quality land. Valuation returns suggested that a majority of Irish holdings had an annual value of under £15, leaving over a million people "normally on the verge of starvation." Urban poverty was similarly stark: in Dublin, 20,000 families lived in one-room tenements, with some six persons sharing a single room. '*Sinn Féin*' criticised the unequal burden of taxation, particularly customs duties on necessities such as tea, sugar, coffee, and cocoa. According to the report, the tax took a disproportionately high share of expenditure from the poor, while wealthy consumers of luxury goods paid proportionally less. Excise duties on items such as cheap clocks, sweets, musical instruments, and motor vehicles further illustrated the article's argument that the tax system favoured the rich. The newspaper also highlighted public expenditure, contrasting the high salaries of state officials with the widespread poverty of ordinary citizens. The Governor-General's salary, for instance, cost the state £676 per week, while the President of the Free State received £273 per week. In 1924, each Act signed by the Governor-General cost the state £585, a figure that 'Sinn Féin' portrayed as a symbol of the excesses of government amidst mass poverty. Overall, the article framed the 1925 Budget as a measure that benefited the wealthy at the expense of the poor, using detailed comparisons of taxation yields and the

conditions of Irish farms, towns, and households to underscore the inequities of the Free State's fiscal system.[119]

In a March 1925 issue of '*Sinn Féin*,' the newspaper analysed the economic structure and industrial capacity of the Irish Free State, highlighting its dependence on agriculture and extreme industrial weakness. According to the report, the country's exports were overwhelmingly dominated by food: eighty-six per cent of total exports consisted of agricultural products, while manufactured goods accounted for only 54% of exports - a remarkably low proportion by international standards. The article emphasised that no other country in the world had such a high share of foods in exports combined with such a small share of industrial products. Even comparatively stagnant Spain exported manufactured goods equivalent to 45% of its total trade, while the United States, despite being a major food producer, exported manufactured goods representing 45% of its total exports. The newspaper criticised the Free State's economic role as primarily a "feeder" for Great Britain. It noted that food production, while necessary, contributed less to national wealth than industrial output. By exporting large quantities of raw agricultural products and importing lower-quality foods for domestic consumption, Ireland was reinforcing its own poverty. The article pointed to extreme poverty as evidenced by this trade imbalance: foods made up eighty per cent of exports but 45% of imports, showing that the country exported high-value produce while consuming cheaper substitutes at home. '*Sinn Féin*' further criticised the country's limited industrial capacity. The Free State imported less than one-tenth of its trade in raw materials, compared to 31–53% in other countries, while simultaneously exporting valuable resources that could be converted into wealth domestically. Among these exports were livestock with hides and skins, round timber, and ores - materials which were processed or fattened in Britain and Scotland to increase their value before being sold. The newspaper described this practice as a severe economic handicap that reflected poor industrial planning and ineffective governance. The article

[119] *Sinn Féin 7/2/1925*

concluded that Ireland's ongoing economic weaknesses were compounded by deficiencies in education. It argued that Irish education, under the existing system, was inadequate for industrial, economic, or scientific development. Without reform, the newspaper suggested, Ireland would remain trapped as a primarily agricultural economy, dependent on other countries for industrial development and wealth creation.[120]

A contribution published by '*Sinn Féin*' on 28 March 1925 acknowledged that recent election results had been encouraging, insofar as they showed returning support, but argued that they still fell short of what should have been achieved. He noted that public attention had turned to the future and questioned how the energy required to secure lasting success could be mobilised. He observed that many young Republicans were disillusioned and idle, and that an opportunity to engage in meaningful, practical work for the cause would have revitalised them. However, he believed that Sinn Féin had failed to attract these supporters because it was widely perceived, whether fairly or not, as complacent and middle-class in character. The author argued that an organisation which more clearly defined itself as Republican in both name and purpose, and which openly committed itself to radical social and economic reforms, would have gained wider backing. These reforms included the abolition of poverty, equal opportunities, the elimination of privilege, the clearance of slums, state control of banking, and other fundamental changes. He pointed out that Éamon de Valera had already asserted that any genuine government should be capable of guaranteeing employment for all able-bodied citizens. If a Republican government had ensured that national resources were used to implement urgent social reforms, the writer believed many currently inactive supporters would have become re-energised and committed to spreading the Republican message.

He maintained that such a programme naturally followed from opposition to empire. While freedom itself was always

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[120] *Sinn Féin 21/3/1925*

attractive, it was even more compelling when it promised a better and happier life for the majority of people. Empire, by contrast, was repellent because it suppressed the human desire for equality and upheld the dominance of the wealthy and powerful. Republicans, he argued, should therefore have openly embraced a commitment to improving living standards for the people as a whole, even if this required reducing privilege in certain quarters. Finally, the writer acknowledged that many of these ideas already existed within Sinn Féin's Economic Programme, but regretted that it was sometimes viewed viewed in the public as separate from Republicanism. He suggested that the two should have been more clearly integrated so that their connection would have been unmistakable.[121]

A '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commentary asserted that although Mr L. Amery's speech about the "Irish Free State" had been delivered in London on St Patrick's Day, where he was the guest of "the Irish Club," the London newspapers had not even mentioned it. According to the commentary, '*The Times*' had spared Mr T. P. O'Connor, speaking at another meeting, half a column of space, yet for Mr Amery speaking on the "Irish Free State" and its future as part of the British Empire, it had devoted not one word. The commentary contrasted this with the conduct of the '*Irish Independent*,' which it asserted had devoted three-quarters of a column on its principal page to the "Coercionist" Secretary of State for the Colonies (including, as it put it, the "Irish Free State"), complete with a giant caption and a black-line double-leader summary. The commentary asked rhetorically what this attention was directed towards, and answered that it was towards "A Tremendous Future." It asserted that the '*Irish Independent*' was a "capitalist paper," and reminded its readers of what it described as a disclosure made in court, when its late proprietor's appeal to the Lord Lieutenant had been referred to, and the Lord Lieutenant's letter had been read out recommending him for a contract in West Africa and certifying his financial soundness. According to the commentary, Mr Amery's speech had suggested large

[121] *Sinn Féin 28/3/1925*

contracts. It asserted that he had spoken of linking the west with the east of Ireland, enlarging harbours, and establishing cross-Channel train-ferry services. The commentary contended that Mr Amery had wanted these projects carried out not for the good of Ireland, but for England. It cited Mr Amery as having said that "in the economic field, there was a tremendous future for co-operation between Ireland and Great Britain," and asserted that this statement encapsulated the true purpose of the proposals he had outlined.[122]

A '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commentary from 13 June 1925 asserted that the extraordinary demand for the 248 houses completed on the Marino site had been deeply significant. It stated that 4,400 families had applied for the 248 dwellings. According to the commentary, the applicants had not been the most needy nor the most wretchedly housed, since those living in the worst slums could not afford the Marino rents. The commentary therefore argued that, even from a restricted public, there had been a demand of roughly two hundred families for every house completed. It asserted that this should be taken as the true measure of the credit the Free State Government deserved for its housing scheme. The commentary claimed that for every 200 dwellings required, the government had been producing only one, and that it had done so amid what it described as a clamour of self-praise that was despicable. According to the commentary, the figures it had cited once again proved that housing had been the greatest need in Ireland at that moment. It asserted that only a few hundred thousand pounds had been spent on housing, and that when appeals had been made for greater provision, the excuse had been offered that the treasury was empty. The commentary contrasted this with what it claimed had been the Free State Government's ability to find £40,000,000 for the Civil War in order to keep Ireland in the Empire. It further asserted that only the previous month the government had found it possible to obtain - or to set about obtaining - £5,000,000 for the Shannon Scheme, which it described as an excellent project in itself but not an urgent necessity, nor something upon which the health and lives of

[122] *Sinn Féin 4/4/1925*

the people depended. According to the commentary, the Shannon Scheme had nevertheless been adopted while housing had been passed over. It asked why this had occurred, and asserted that it was because the scheme offered publicity, self-advertisement, and foreign prestige for what it mockingly termed the "young Ministers" and "go-ahead young Governors." The commentary maintained that the less spectacular work of "housing the people" would not have attracted the attention of the "capitalist press of the world" to the "splendid young Cabinet." In conclusion, the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commentary asserted that rivers were being developed while the people who were meant to use them were left to rot away in the slums.[123]

An article published by '*An Phoblacht*' on 10 July 1925, launched a sustained attack on Thomas Johnson, the leader of the Labour Party and of the parliamentary opposition in the Irish Free State. Written in the newspaper's characteristic sardonic and polemical tone, it portrayed Johnson as a man who had belatedly and reluctantly discovered what republicans had known for years: that British control continued to dominate Ireland under a veneer of self-government. The article's broader message was that Johnson's moderation and faith in constitutional politics had blinded him to the economic and political realities of English influence, and that his eventual disillusionment only proved the correctness of Sinn Féin's revolutionary position. The piece began with a brief reflection on the fourth anniversary of the Truce of 1921, recalling the joy and exultation that had followed the end of the War of Independence and contrasting it with the bitterness and disappointment of 1925. The writer described the streets of Dublin as blazing with bonfires and songs of victory, the black pall of war lifted, and the people's sense of deliverance from "nameless dread." Yet, the article argued, the triumph had since turned to ashes: Ireland's apparent freedom had proved illusory, and the generation that had been celebrated in 1921 was now burdened with unemployment, emigration, and disillusion. The failures of the post-Truce era, it lamented, had become "the fountains of

[123] *Sinn Féin 13/6/1925*

inspiration to the children of the vanquished," suggesting that future generations would again have to fight for true independence. Turning from commemoration to satire, the paper introduced "Mr Johnson's Discovery." It claimed that history repeated itself "incessantly," and that Johnson had merely rediscovered the "ancient truth" that had driven earlier patriots - Lord Edward Fitzgerald, John Philpot Curran, Arthur O'Connor, Henry Grattan, and later Michael Davitt - to withdraw from English-controlled institutions. The writer mockingly presented Johnson's recent speeches, in which he had expressed despair at Parliament's inability to relieve unemployment, as a late awakening to a reality republicans had long recognised: that British influence still ruled Ireland. The article described this as the "devastating dominance of British influence in Irish affairs," a dominance that had changed its outward form in each generation - once through "persecution of Papists," later through famine and landlordism, and now through "chronic unemployment." Johnson, it said, had bowed his head before this reality because "he had so despaired of anything good coming out of Leinster Lawn," the seat of the Free State Parliament. His call for Labour members to abstain from certain votes and to seek reform within the system was presented as a tacit confession of defeat. The article argued that Johnson's despair had effectively vindicated Sinn Féin's long-held belief that the Free State Parliament (Dáil) was only a continuation of British rule under a new name. It claimed that, had Johnson possessed the wisdom of Sinn Féin three years earlier, he would not now be enduring the humiliation of learning that "economic chaos" had converted him to the view that parliamentary reform could never succeed. Though sympathetic to him, the piece implied that Tom Johnson's conversion to pessimism was belated and meaningless because the true radicals had foreseen the collapse of such "constitutional experiments" from the start. Under the heading "Reluctant Followers," the writer mocked the Labour deputies who had voted against Tom Johnson in Parliament. Their rebellion, it claimed, was not an act of principle but of self-interest, since Labour politicians, like other deputies, were dependent upon politics for their livelihood and reluctant to surrender their £600 salaries. The

article sneered that these men's opposition to Johnson was the predictable reaction of those who valued their incomes above conviction. At the same time, it argued that Johnson himself would ultimately be vindicated, because his own followers would eventually discover what he had learned - that in any British-dominated assembly, "British interests must eventually crowd out every Irish interest." Even if the Free State Parliament passed "remedial legislation," it said, such measures were doomed to failure, as the decay of the nation would go on until the institutions of British governance were rejected entirely. The article concluded this section with a sarcastic twist, noting that Johnson had recently told workers that the machinery of the Free State was a "national impediment" rather than a help - a statement that, in the paper's view, belatedly confirmed the republican position.

The piece also included a section titled "A Political Denial," in which it mocked the official Labour Party explanation of the alleged rift between Johnson and his parliamentary colleagues. The party had issued a statement denying that Johnson intended to resign the leadership or that he had contemplated withdrawal from Parliament. '*An Phoblacht*' hotly dismissed this as transparent "chair-cover-to-hide-threadbare-upholstery," a phrase that ridiculed Labour's attempt to disguise its internal disarray. The article asserted that any fool could see that Johnson's speeches and actions demonstrated a deep disillusionment with parliamentary methods. It quoted his recent declarations that he could "no longer rely upon Parliament to do anything for men," interpreting them as an admission that the Labour Party's constitutional experiment had failed. In this portrayal, Johnson appeared as a tragicomic figure - a well-intentioned reformer who had come to understand too late that the Free State Parliament was powerless against British capital and influence. Finally, the article concluded with a brief but scathing paragraph titled "The Press and the 'President.'" Here, the writer ridiculed both the Labour leader and President Cosgrave. It mocked Cosgrave's denunciation of the press as dishonest and worthless, suggesting that his hostility to criticism was the typical arrogance of a man

"kicked up the ladder by the capitalist wind." The press, it argued, had simply exposed the truth: that the Free State government and its parliamentary opponents alike were complicit in maintaining England's dominance. This closing section had tied Johnson's disillusionment and Cosgrave's defensiveness together as symptoms of the same hollow political system. This '*An Phoblacht*' article functioned as both a cutting commentary and ideological attack. It ridiculed Thomas Johnson as a naïve and timid reformer, whose slow recognition of the futility of parliamentary politics only confirmed the republican belief that true independence could never come from British institutions. The writer's tone was mocking yet bitterly moralistic, turning Johnson's despair into a cautionary tale. His "discovery" of British dominance was portrayed as comic because it had been obvious to republicans all along. Beneath the sarcasm, however, lay a serious message: that the Irish Free State, despite its apparent autonomy, remained an economic and political dependency of Great Britain, and that any attempt to achieve social or economic reform within its framework was doomed. The piece had reflected '*An Phoblacht's*' broader mission in the 1920s - to expose the Free State as a continuation of colonial rule, to denounce parliamentary compromise, and to keep alive the republican demand for complete national and economic freedom.[124]

In November 1925, the pro-Republican newspaper '*Honesty*' discussed how a media campaign had been coordinated against the Boers in South Africa by London-based sources and its allies. In doing so, it launched an anti-Semitic attack. The newspaper attributed this to Jewish financiers in London, because of their "such strong interests in the minds," as well as the "Anglo-Jewish press," which it claimed had been "most despicable in their methods of mud-slinging." '*Honesty*' also claimed that "wherever Jew capitalists got a grip on the press, they made their influence felt."[125]

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[124] *An Phoblacht 10/7/1925*

[125] *Honesty 14/11/1925*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

SOUTHERN STAR, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1922.

NEW PLAN OUTLINED, BY ANTI-TREATY LEADERS.

GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT.

Dublin, Thursday Evening.—The following was issued by the Government Publicity Department to-day:—

"RING POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF THE ANTI-TREATY LEADERS.

"HOW TO CAPTURE IRISH LABOUR.

"The War to be made, of Unemployment, Starvation, the Foolish Bride, and the Desire for Land.

"No Serious Support for an Army Invasion—Dissensions in the Ranks—Labour to be Deceived—Land Raiding Revived to the English Taking a Hand.

"The author of the document printed below who signs 'L. O'M.' and 'L. M.' is Liam O'Mellowes, Liam Mellowes, one of the real leaders of the Anti-Treaty Party. The document consists of three parts, was all supposed to be 1920. Since the Truce and the Treaty, however, the writer being a prisoner, 21 suffering well given parole to defend a fellow soldier and play at campaign for the Republic. The 'Republic Party' follows immediately the proposal to establish a Provisional Republican Government. It considers seriously and solely of a policy proposed in the "Workers' Republic," which was issued by the Irish Transport Union in Dublin known as the Communist Party. This programme, the author proposes, is to be made easier to be the scene on the Social Programme of Dail Eireann (January, 1919) transformed into something definite.'

"The object of the new 'Republican Policy' is made perfectly clear. It is to capture Labour. That is the whole point in the proposed 'Provisional Republican Government.' This 'Government' the author admits, likely to be 'unable to function actively' (what) to Fighting, in a most limited way." Much less would it be able to establish the proposed Communist system in Ireland or in any part of Ireland. The purpose of the new 'Republican' programme is to be made to appear to the Irish people, the unemployed, the thousands of people when 'interesting in fasting' as that the situation may be utilised for the Republic.' 1.—'So long our vote must be sought.' 2.—It is essential that the 'Republic' be once again reaffirmed by the people by vote or non, as possible. When that may be no one can tell, but it must be done at the earliest date.

Accordingly votes are to be purchased in advance by running the stolen-in-the country people to provide a bribe for 'the sum of no property,' having promised ourselves that this was the aim of Wolfe Tone and of the Dail Eireann of 1920.

"With a better right, the author says, we can claim to be the Republic than the Republic established by the Free State Executive, of which the author was a member. This scheme was mainly the work of P.J.R., the initials being those of P. J. Rutledge, the Belfast solicitor, member of the former Dail, and leader of the Anti-Treaties in Manchester. Tomas O Dubgy O'Dubgy), who is to be executed, was also a member of the Dail who opposed the Treaty. E. O'Dubgy, Peadar Kearney, a prominent leader of the republicans.

"The author does not pretend that he himself or Dr. P. J. Rutledge, or the I.R.A. Executive, had ever in any previous phase of their existence been adherents of the gospel of State Socialism. He justifies their adoption of that gospel now on the ground that 'the people' are ready for it, and that all the Treaty' and 'supporters of the Free State.' He does not recount the double object, to produce political support with plunder and to provide political opponents. The author, it may be remarked, has posed hitherto as an opponent of the pure principle and high idealism. He scoffs at this 'extraordinary Republic' of the Labour Party,' thereafterwards, observing, the stories of postal workers, interest, bankers refused for the Republic,' as support heavily but merely as factors to be 'utilised for the Republic,' as support for a Government that could not function. The value of the bribe will be understood by those to whom it is offered in the light of its author's own description of 'the English taking a hand.'

"The author of the document printed below who signs 'L. O'M.' and 'L. M.' is Liam O'Mellowes, Liam Mellowes, one of the real leaders of the Anti-Treaty Party. The document consists of three parts, was all supposed to be 1920. Since the Truce and the Treaty, however, the writer being a prisoner. It suffices

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

All Communications and all Exchanges to 22 St. Patrick's Road, Dublin.

Did you send that Sub.? WELL!

DO IT NOW

THE WORKERS' Republic

The Official Organ of The Communist Party of Ireland.

(An Organ of the Third International.)

FOUNDED BY JAMES CONNOLLY AUGUST, 1898.

Join the DUBLIN BRANCH Fridays, 8 p.m. 42, Nth. Great Georges St.

New Series. No. 30. SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1922. TWOPENCE.

GIVIL WAR NECESSARY

he Free State and Bolsheviks

is the official organ of the Free State Party—"The Free State "—in its issue 22nd April, we find an article by Eamon de Riaghd the Dail Minister of ade and Commerce, on "Murderers and Bolsheviks." It is well worth read- it is by the best politicians by far on the Free State side, and may be the st honest, as well as the cleverest, and contingent. We would gladly re- duce this article in extenso had we more space, but the Labour lads-out has ed our May Day Double Number! It commences thus: "It is being said s amongst the murderers the only men who know their own minds and have definite and deliberately chosen policy are the Bolsheviks. The contention id seem to be correct." There follows, then an examination to show that Be- ses and his followers have no policy. Needless to say we disagree! But ing examining us, Blythe indicates that all the non-Bolsheviks are leaving Ireaty—"rapidly getting out of the ranks altogether"! How we wish that was true!!

"There remains the Bolsheviks. They may be divided into two classes, th of which know their own minds to some extent as to the future, and have l defined ideas as to the course of action to be pursued immediately. The r class consists of those who are really Bolsheviks, because they are aiming s or less determinately at the Bolshevik objective. There are a couple of Bri- tons and at least one member of the Executive who profess to be Communists, d who stand against the Treaty largely because they see in the conditions which ld follow its rejection a chance of realising their social ideal." This part is fairly encouraging! Some were inclined to be sceptical when we made that remark about a number of Brigadiers being Bolsheviks or anti-Bolsheviks; but in the Free States confirm our views, who can doubt that the Communists not without support in the Army? Who can doubt that our propaganda making decisive headway?

he next sentence is interesting from a personal point of view. "It is not ecessary here to discuss the merits or demerits of Communism." Patiently screen up the fact that the author once lent his support to Communism in country; that he once accepted, in a diluted form, perhaps, the principles tactics of the Communists and deigned himself ready to apply strenuous self to use. That being true, it is perhaps awkward, to say the least, for Blythe to start discussing the "demerits" of Communism!

ppeal this Ernest Blythe fails to be interesting—his article degenerates into ional clash about "the Russian episode of a small and determined arty imposing its will by force on the great mass of the people," and about "second nature" of the Irish people—as absolutely different from all other ples, y'know!—in meeting "coercion with resistance." All slush and mpost! The demagogue's view, but on the estimate of a politician of ghtly.

We question this article as, amongst other things, marking a new departure the tactics of the Free State Party. Much to the regret of the Labour Party in its organ, "The Voice of Labour Leaders," the Free State" has given the e away! It actually tells the workers that hold Bolsheviks exist in this ntry! And, when the above-mentioned contents tried to secure everyone that Communists nor Bolsheviks were to be found at all! The "Free State" in- ds to drive the I.R.A. into the arms of the Bolsheviks, who, Blythe fears, are ning "control of the Army"—in the hope that the Republican Party will be finally destroyed and that the new Communist "Faction" will be unable to shape the sudden unrolling of its badly-organised forces, and accordingly col- pse. We only hope the "Free State" will succeed in the dim part of its brain—if it manage alright to absorb the new notions and set them along the right path!

t-Back and Recovery.

We thought we had lost another and when "The Communist," organ the United Communist Party of Australia failed to appear for two months. We might have known the best! "Labour papers and those enthusiasm and are synonymous ters," indeed, they are!

The Central Executive," we read their issue of March 15th, Vol. II., p. 7, "wishes to apologise to our ders of "The Communist" for the ppearance of the last three num- rs. Our printer has been on the ve, and this, together with a few ver reasons, has made it impossible bring out "The Communist." We e to continue from now on without break, and, with the support of our ders, financially and otherwise, we l succeed."

We sincerely hope you do, com- des, and we would urge all the re- olutionary workers of Irish birth or nections in Australia to give to "The Communist" the largest measure our Irish generosity. By helping "The Communist" in Australia, you e helping us here at home, helping e revolutionary labour elements in r "own" land to attain to power declare a Soviet Republic, a orkers' Republic.

PETER LARKIN'S FAREWELL! LEAVING AUSTRALIA!

On Sunday, March 19th, the United Communist Party of Australia held a Grand Rally in their new Hall, in Sussex Street, Sydney, to give Peter Larkin, brother to Jim, a rousing send-off and farewell.

Several comrades spoke, including Tom Glynn, C. W. Baker, and Peter himself. How long until we have to call the reasons to the class struggle "right here?

CUMANN. 1916.

9 North Frederick St.,
26.4.'22.

A Chara,—I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Arthur Wetha, a member of the old Socialist Party of Ireland, was killed in action during the evacuation of the Hotel Metropole in Easter Week, 1916, and his name has never appeared in any Roll of Honour after published. Some of our members would be glad if you would publish this.

Mise do cara,
WALTER CARPENTER (Jun.),

" P. K."—No article however good is accepted anonymously. We must have your name and address, though neither may be published if you so desire.

American Politicals Released.

" After being compelled to undergo the tortures of prison for one and a half years, I. E. Ferguson and C. H. Rutherford, who were convicted of violation of the Criminal Anarchy Act New York in October, 1920, are to be released on bail pending the disposition of their case by the Court of Appeal.

" A certificate of reasonable doubt was issued by Judge Cordozo on April 19th which frees the prisoners on bail."

" If the certificate of reasonable doubt is issued in the case of Ferguson and Rutherdorg, it will open the way to the release of all of the political prisoners in the State of New York."

So says the New York " Worker " of April 29th. These nice include Jim Larkin. This " reasonable doubt " business is a preliminary to quashing the sentence and releasing the prisoners. The Reds Chase in New York is reasoned from its hysteria, and so accordingly it is ten to one we have Jim Larkin back leading the Irish proletariat before the summer is well on, this year.

We Heartily Agree.

The following is from " The Plain People," the Sunday organ of the Republicans—

It was very amusing to ladicrous, in a contrast, lying Press on its side, and Workers' Republic, to see the Reactionary Republicans—Labour Fakirs and dictatorship—under the guise of an "Anti-militarist Protest"—now endorsing the people who are carrying on the fight with Arms. Certainly it used to keen in Easter Week, 1916. T. Johnson's pious resolutions, that we are equally against both Free State Forces and the I.R.A., still deserve no one who remembers his insolence Labbering in favour of the "Workers of Armaments."

Monday's proclamation, was quite in keep-up with the conduct of the English Leader of the Irish Workers, who some years before the Dising deserted Jones, "actually giving his anti-recruiting encouragement to Britain. The National Executive of the Irish Labour Party protests the fact that the Republican Government (" on the run" until July, 1921) did not see fit to effect the immediate release of all internal which it had adopted. Does the National Executive claim that the Workers of Ireland owe the apathy and indifference with which the Labour Party looked on while the Workers were being reduced to starvation—I Be pensioned on the part of Binglemen, I. By reduction in wages on the part of the Employers—?

The National Executive not tight- ens contented to draw their salaries. So tells them of a General Strike in the interest of the Workers. But, when this valuable weapon of the Workers could be used in the interests of Republicanism, then the "Independents," which called on the blood of James Connolly to have no effect in the Republican Insurrection of Easter Week made their usual pretty position, possibly considered both as approval, when the so-like "Inspector of Strike-Breakers," the Imperial Postmaster-General of the "Irish Free State," Mr. J. J. Walsh, offered to close down all the activities of the Post Office Services, then the National Executive of the Labour Party with the vessels of Capitalism and

Anti-Bureaucrats Strike!

Real Significance of Clerks Strike in Finance Department, I. T. & G. W. U.

True Facts and Inner History

By Former Assistant General Secretary.

I want to congratulate your paper on giving space and support to the four

NEW PARTIES ADMITTED.

" The Communist International is still growing. Here is a paragraph from the Report of Comrade Zinoviev on the work of the Executive Committee to the enlarged Executive that met in Moscow in February:

" **The Irish Workers' Party of Ireland, Turin and Canada were admitted as National Sections.**"

" II Comunista," Feb. 28.

The full report is brief may be obtained in the April number of " The Communist Review," obtainable at this office for 6d., or 70 cent free.

We propose later publishing parts of the report and resolutions of the Enlarged Executive which is sure to be

clerks on strike in the Finance Department of the Head Office of the I.T. and G.W.U.

From the number involved the matter might seem of small importance, but as a symptom of a deadly disease from which both the I.T. & G.W.U. and the Labour Party are suffering—bureaucracy—it is full of meaning for the Irish working class.

DECLINE OF THE UNION.

O'Brien and Foran, with their henchmen on the Resident Executive, have been waging the " war on the clerks " with great success for about two years now, and these four are about the last to preserve their personal independence out of the splendid staff with whom old Union was built up after the debacle of 1918. All the rest have learned to crawl to the labour bosses of 35 Parnell Square to keep their jobs— Those who did not, have either resigned voluntarily or been squeezed out. The same applies to the staff of organisers. It once numbered 21. The total is hardly six now. The methods by which the Organisers have been disposed of would be interesting to a meeting of, say, Branch Delegates, if such a thing existed as a feature in the Union, but unfortunately it does not. The Executive rules supreme in the Union, and by the Executive I mean the Dublin Committee. (The " country " members (as the men from Limerick, Waterford, etc., are called) only exist to register the Dublin men's decrees, and of the Dublin men only two count, Foran and O'Brien.

THE TWO TENDENCIES.

The reason why these four clerks were ordered into the position of having to take action at all hazards or pass under the yoke like the rest is a matter of deep concern to the whole working-class of Ireland. This little fight is just the breaking out on the surface of an incident in the struggle that has been going on silently at Headquarters for years between two conflicting conceptions of the Union and its role. Foran stands for a Dublin Union with control centred in the inner branch at Liberty Hall, and a convenient number of other persons acting weakly tributary in relation for reciprocal help in wages-movements. Some of what we call the I.T.G.W.U. to be broadly national in scope, and to display such features as would earn the praise of the onlookers, visitors, etc., who didn't have to work inside it, a numerous and varied membership, strong finance, attempts at industrial organisation (these never get further than the paper plan)—all this our ambition, however, that he should hold the strings of power himself, that he should reign on top of the heap. The rational conception involves naturally a big ef-

(Continued on page 4.)

HELD OVER!

P. L. Corbett's reply to Captain White; L. O'Kelly's letter, and several other matters are unavoidably held over. This includes much poetry (!), some of which is ready for publication as soon as " Caitlin," and the banners of several other non-de-plumes for send their names and address. Both the poetry and the poet or poetess must

Revolutionary-left publications and causes had aligned themselves to the Anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War, as seen inside issues of the 'Workers Republic' newspaper.

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

All Communications and all Exchanges to 22 St. Patrick's Road, Dublin.

Special Appeal Page 3

THE WORKERS' REPUBLIC

The Official Organ of The Communist Party of Ireland.

(An Organ of the Third International.)

FOUNDED BY JAMES CONNOLLY, AUGUST, 1896.

New Series. No. 26. SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1922. TWOPENCE.

Did you send that Sub.? WELL! DO IT NOW

I.R.A. Stands for Republic.

Bravo, Dublin Brigade!

On Sunday last the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. mustered in practically full strength at Smithfield to avow its allegiance to the Republic and the Republic only. Despite the scurrilous attempt of the G.H.Q. to side-track the men they turned out en masse and gave the lie once and for all to the oft repeated statements that the vast majority of the men are in favour of the Treaty. What applies to the Dublin Brigade applies to the whole country, and the contention that easily 80 per cent. of the Army repudiates G.H.Q. and adheres to the newly appointed Executive as its supreme head is well borne out in fact. Where then stand the slanderers of the young manhood of the Irish Nation? Be it noted that the very necessary lesson dealt out to the "Freeman's Journal" has had a salutary effect on the Press in general and in Dublin in particular. Even these unscrupulous purveyors of doped news can be made to tell the truth, and it is very edifying to note in what chastened spirit they proceed to dish up the details of the parade of the Dublin Brigade. 3,200 out of a total of 3,600, we are told, were present, and in another column we read "their efforts to withdraw the Irish Republican Army from its allegiance to Dail Eireann seem to have borne formidable fruit." Which means that the I.R.A. has refused to do the dirty work of the British and Irish Capitalists, and the puppy Press has come to heel at the first sting of the lash.

Nothing appeals to these people like the mediæval method of love to deal out to others, namely, the mailed fist, and so we are able to at least get a glimmering of the truth about the Army, and in doing so to learn incidentally how determined the Free Staters in control are to sell us into British Bondage. To close-up munition-making factories and demobilise the I.R.A. in the North at this period shows clearly their subservience to the British Government. That they are being frustrated in their nefarious designs is due to the adherence of the leaders of the I.R.A. to the teachings of Connolly and Pearse, and the I.R.A. will yet finish its incompleted task of setting up and consolidating the Republic.

The Dublin Brigade has once and for all given the lie to its traducers.

Damn the Free State!

TO-DAY (Monday) the Capitalist Press gleefully announces that the Free State is legally established, that it has been placed on the Statute Book. In other words, that John Bull has graciously granted permission to the people of Ireland to put his (John Bull's) decrees into operation. The Free State Bill has become an Act, has been placed on the Statute Book of the British House of Parliament, and there it must be allowed to fester and rot as far as the people of Ireland are concerned.

In this respect we welcome a decided stiffening in the attitude of the Republican Party to the Pro-Treatyites, no doubt inspired by the unflinchingly determined stand taken by the I.R.A. But much more is needed if the Republic is not to be betrayed. If the elections are to be allowed to be held, it must be on a revised register based on adult suffrage. Every man and woman of 18 years of age and over must have a vote. The hoary beards of yesterday, the arm-chair warriors cannot be allowed to vote away the victory fought for and won by the young men and women of the country. The present register was compiled at a time when for the young men to register was to supply information to the British Government, and consequently very few of them have votes. If they are old enough to handle a gun they are old enough to vote, and elections on the present obsolete register cannot be tolerated. No votes, no election must be the slogan of the young men and women throughout the country.

On top of that all decrees and mandates of the British-constituted Provisional Government must be ignored and its departments not allowed to function. Already the Irish Press is faintly echoing the demands of the British Capitalist Press that the Provisional Government forcibly impose its decrees

(Continued on page 4.)

Labour Party and Russian Famine

Russian Workers' Government Ignored

At long last the Irish Labour Party has thought fit to endeavour to do something on behalf of the famine sufferers in Russia, or, to be correct, on behalf of the children in the famine area. In making this appeal they make the excuse for their inactivity that they were endeavouring to establish direct exchange of goods between Russia and Ireland, and so provide relief on a bigger scale than through a relief fund. Very good; but why not both methods? Why not establish a relief fund while carrying on the negotiations for the exchange of goods? No! the excuse is rather lame, and does not justify the callous inaction of the Labour Party on this question.

But worse than that, now that they have taken belated action, what they give with the one hand they take away with the other by ignoring the Famine Relief Committee officially connected with the Soviet Government, and proposing to send the money collected through the "Save the Children" Fund, a capitalist organised and administered fund. Good work is done by capitalist organisations, may be doing, it is the duty of all working-class bodies to send all relief through the official Committee of the Soviet Government —namely, the international Workers' Famine Relief Committee, Berlin. The "Save the Children" Fund confines itself to providing food, etc., for the children; but much more than that is required, and most important for the workers of all countries is the fact that, if the starving Russians have to depend on capitalist sources for relief, they accordingly lose faith in their own Government.

That is what the capitalist Imperialists want and are striving for, and it is up to the workers, of all countries to see, first of all, that their starving fellow-workers in Russia get relief, and, secondly, that this relief is supplied through the official Committee of the Russian Government. There is an Irish National Section of this Committee, but we do not expect the Irish Labour Party Executive to support that. It was started by the Communist Party, and has been chiefly run by them. As everybody knows, the Communists are political enemies of all Labour Gladstones and misleaders of the working class, and the Johnsons, O'Briens, O'Shannons, etc., of the Labour Party are too petty and unprincipled to recognise a food row by their political enemies, despite their oft-vaunted professions of support for the Russian Soviet Government. They are too small to rise above their every-party interests, and, rather than do so, are prepared to aid the Soviet Government in the back. That is what they are doing, as they could quite easily send their relief funds, direct, to the I.W.P.R. Committee in Berlin, and so save themselves from the capitalist the Irish National Section, Edgar T. Whitehead is the English-speaking delegate on that Committee, and in support of what we have said we quote the following from an article by him in last week's "Communist":—

"The Workers' International Famine Relief Organisation, both in its international centre and its national sections, has always been sharply distinguished from all other Famine Relief Organisations in that they alone have clearly realised the best help for the famine areas is first to feed the population and then go forward to energetically helping them to rebuild their entire productive and economic life.

(Continued on Page 4.)

OFFICIAL.

O'CLAIGH NA-n-EIREANN,
Dublin City Brigade,
4th April, 1922.

General Headquarters,
Dublin,
4th April, 1922.

The Manager,
"The Workers' Republic,"
Nth. St. George's Street.

A Chara,

Please publish the enclosed in your next issue.

Mise do chara,
For ARMY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE,
I.R.A.
JOHN O'CONNOR.

Michael Sweeney, Battalion e of this Brigade, and late Active Service Unit, I.R.A., an untried Military Prisoner in Mountjoy Prison, has been on hunger strike since Thursday last, and is reported as being now in a very serious condition.

Three weeks ago the Chief of Staff and Adjutant-General at Beggar's Bush Barracks promised him, in the presence of the Commandant of this Brigade, an early trial, but they have not yet done anything in that way.

Michael Sweeney held the rank of Lieutenant in the Grand Company, attached to this Brigade.

The London Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

II.

We cannot immediately proceed to the discussion of the main business of the Congress—Electoral Policy and the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. This meeting must be considered, as it was considered at the Congress, in its logical sequence to discussion of the questions of the Irish Party and the United Front. Before we come even to these matters, a few points of general interest deserve mention.

The total number of delegates was 159, representing 147 Branches. 25 were proxy delegates, representing distant Branches (to save expense). But quite two-thirds of the delegates were from the provinces—a satisfactory proportion, in view of the finances of the Party. A notable feature, commented on in our hearing by a bourgeois Pressman, was that it was a "young Congress—i.e., many beards and bald heads were conspicuous by their absence. There must have been few men or women over 40 in the hall. Another notable feature, to one familiar with old-time Socialist Congresses (this applies to the Continent as well as to Britain) was the genuinely proletarian character of the personnel. The official group in the Party, unfortunately, consists of persons who have become professional politicians, and are removed thereby from the activities of working class life. There seems to be no way of avoiding this drawback of all types of working class organisations—of avoiding what Robert Michels terms "the iron law of oligarchy." The oligarchs, "Watch your Leaders," is as necessary in the Communist Party as in the Irish unions. But in contradistinction to the old Socialist Parties, the I.L.P., for instance, the Communist Party is proletarian, not petty bourgeois.

The most important discussion during the first day of the Congress concerned the resolution on the Mass Party.

"The task of the C.P. everywhere is to act as the leading and inspiring section of the working-class in the fight against capitalism. It is, therefore, entirely to urge the workers to resist the present attack on wages and hours of labour. Also to strive for the formation of a mass party, possessing the confidence of the workers in the highest degree, and, by entering into these daily struggles against the capitalists, prepare the way for final victory."

The discussion on this resolution turned on the question as to what was really meant by the Third International slogan of the Mass Party. Palme Dutt, editor of the "Labour Monthly," and an authority on the International, made an interesting distinction. He said the old Socialist parties were "parties of propaganda," the new Communist parties were "parties of organisation." To lay stress on organisation rather than of propaganda made a party a mass party. Miller, the author of "Direct Action," did not fear the influx of the masses en masse, for this would make the party "a party of mass action." Leckie, on the other hand, an engineer from the Clyde, and now one of the party organisers, deprecated the idea of opening the party to undigested masses. Only those should be admitted who really understood what Communism is. However, enthusiasm, who came in easily would go out easily. They were a source of weakness. Another delegate, also referred to the danger of Communism being made fashionable, and pointed out that the Russian Party had found it necessary to have a "spring cleaning."

The resolution was adopted, but by the present writer the discussion seemed to have touched the problem precisely why the Third International means by a "Mass Party."

(Continued on Page 4.)

Lord Kenmare as Milkman.

The Cow may Run Dry.

The employees of Lord Kenmare have demanded increases in their wages, and, wanted, according to the noble lord, at from 9s. 6d. to 10s. per week. Rather than pay the threatens to sell off his farm stock, and warns the Killarney Urban Council that, as his supplies most of the milk for the town, they may be left without any if his workers persist in their demands. However, the Urban Councillors are quite philosophical, and not at all alarmed over the prospect of his enforcing off the milk supply. In fact some of them even hinted the milk was of inferior quality and sold at a profiteering price. It is sadly too bad that, such a scion of the old nobility should have his hard-bossed efforts to earn a living so misunderstood. If Lord Kenmare cannot pay decent wages and make his estate pay, it is high time he made way for those who can. The workers can go on supplying the milk and running the show themselves, and give Lord Kenmare the noble rocks of the land. It is long overdue.

Another sample issue of such.

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

THIS PAPER IS SOLD FOR ONE PENNY PER COPY

THE IRISH WORKER

An t-Oibrióe Saorlaċ

Edited by JIM LARKIN

No. 18. New Series. (Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.) SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd, 1923 ONE PENNY

HOMAS McPARTLIN.

omas McPartlin, mber of the malgamated Soci- y of Woodworkers nator — Free ate — £360 a ar. Worked at trade during his natorship. Died natural death aving a widow, ir sons, four- ughters—four of om are working. e Free State overnment, em- oyers and certain ion Officials ganise a fund for widow and ildren at his ave.

SEAN McENTEE.

Sean McEntee, member of Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, who according to Inspector Moynihan of the Criminal Investigation Department, Free State Government, was brutally murdered — leaving a widow and three young helpless children. Neither the Government of the Free State, the employers or the Mutual Admiration Society of Union Officials ever expressed a word of sympathy, or subscribed one penny for McEntee's widow and orphans.

KEEPING THE RING!

To Our Readers.—You who have followed in thought, and we hope ith sympathy and understanding, the crisis we are confronted with re in Dublin, will understand and accept the curtailment of this issue. y and night has been given to the task of keeping an army—betrayed v its self-appointed leaders—intact, strengthened and disciplined. ever in the history of the struggle of the working class has there been ith open and unashamed treachery, and more devilish, malignant d unscrupulous foes—associated employers, intriguing, soulless, treach- ous Union Officials, and last, but not least, every arm of the Government at in force to coerce and intimidate these men who have fought against ch overwhelming odds. We print a cartoon which eloquently depicts e struggle and its concomitants here. The artist shows a victim— worker—triced to a beam. A Christian in uniform faces the bound ctim, covering him with a gun while two typical oppressors lash their oiled and intimidated victim with whips. The artist gives title to oquent satire on the actual conditions we have endured—as "Keeping e Ring"—giving you, the reader, a line drawing, conveying much ore than words can convey. The worker struggling though bound the ropes of Official Union treachery, the bullies the employers armed th whips, lashing his lacerated body—and the Government keeping e Ring—Yes! Keeping the victim cowed with the threat of instant ath!" The brute personified—armed with a lethal weapon even fearful f the victim bound, fearful of his own conscience though armed with eath. Those are the actual living facts. The workers of the quays of ublin have had to face hired gunmen—farmers and farmers' sons, according to one christian gentleman who boasts that forty of these gunmen were members of the Roscommon Farmers' Union. The Government permitted these gunmen to carry lethal weapons, and in order to protect them supplied police (D.M.P.) and Civic Guards, and to protect these protectors the Army of the Free State supplied its quota. Even with these the employers failed to overawe or compel the workers to accept even their amended terms.

The employers then called up their last reserve—the Transport Union Officials, who had been working secretly with the employers, had then to unmask. The end is not yet!

We have no space to carry the story of the most significant happening during the past nine purgatorial years. Four thousand dockers, carters, coal workers, sailors and firemen, and comrades from fields, factories, railway shops, and our women members—more than half of these nation builders having been on strike twenty weeks—came out into the streets sacrificing their day's pay which they can so ill afford to lose, to express their love, refresh their memories, and strengthen their determination, by giving honour to Ireland's youngest martyr—Kevin Barry—who's young sister, Eileen, lies at the threshold of death, a participant in the "Liberty or Death" Hunger Strike of the untried prisoners in the Bastilles of this Free State. And these working men and women demonstrated to demand the release of these prisoners, and an insistence upon a condition of peace within this land.

Cosgrave challenged these workers. They have answered him in a way—they will answer him again in another manner and application.

This 1923 cover page of the 'Irish Worker', edited by then hard-left trade union leader, Jim Larkin, depicts an armed Irish Free State official permitting the flogging of an organised industrial worker.
(Source: The Irish Worker 3/11/1923)

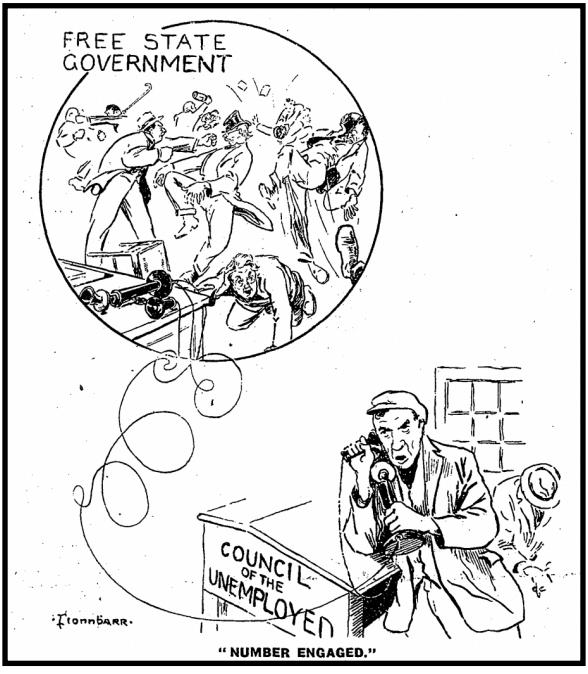
JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

By courtesy of The Communist

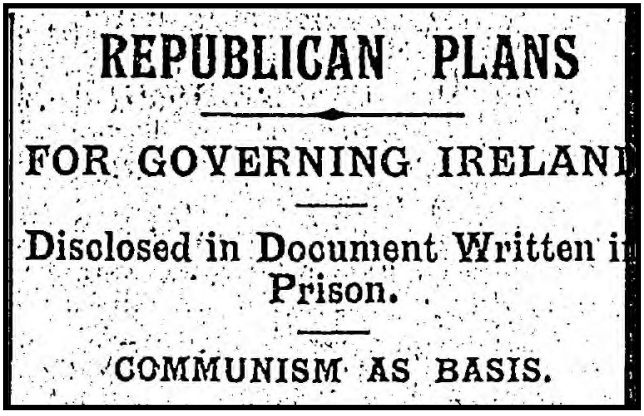
Inspector John Bull *(to Gaoler Saorstat)*: You've done well, my man. I can leave you in charge now!

A far-left cartoon depicts the Westminster government handing over administration of the prevailing system to the Irish Free State.
(Source: The Workers' Republic 23/12/1922)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



(Photo source: Sinn Féin 25/1/1925)



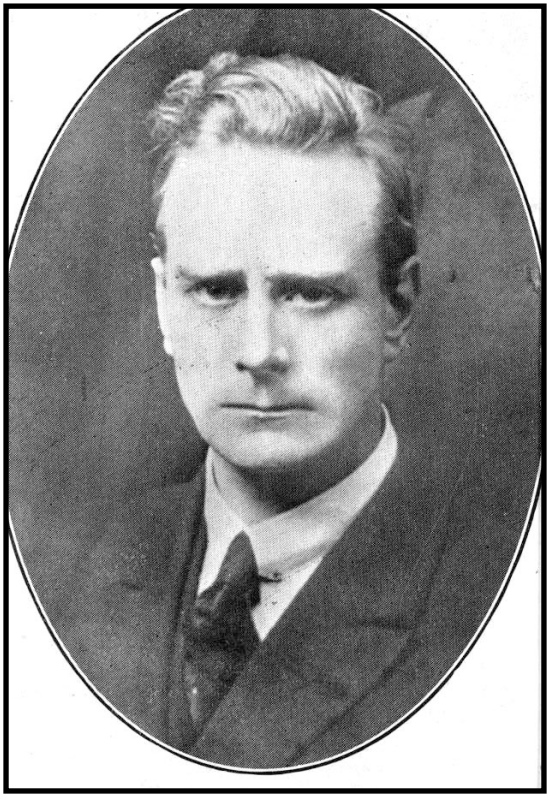
REPUBLICAN PLANS

FOR GOVERNING IRELAND

Disclosed in Document Written in Prison.

COMMUNISM AS BASIS.

The Anti-Treaty IRA were denounced for advocating a programme based on "Communism."
(Source: Belfast Newsletter 22/9/1922)



Liam Mellows, a revolutionary TD and member of the Anti-Treaty IRA Army Executive, has often been credited with articulating the economic nationalism that was ultimately associated with die-hard Republicans.
(Photo source: National Library of Ireland)

Muriel MacSwiney (née Murphy, daughter of a Cork 'merchant prince' and later wife of the martyred MP, Lord Mayor of Cork and O.C of the Cork No.1 Brigade, Terence MacSwiney), became notable for her subsequent communist activity, also calling for the establishment of a "Workers' Republic" at a 1923 general election meeting.
(Photo source: National Library of Ireland)

THE SHADOW OF THE GUNMAN
KEEP IT FROM YOUR HOME
VOTE FOR
CUMANN NA nGAEDHEAL
WE WANT NO 'REDS' HERE! KEEP THEIR COLOUR OFF YOUR FLAG!
VOTE FOR
CUMANN NA nGAEDHEAL

Cumann na nGaedheal had associated the IRA with Communist elements in their campaigns.
(Photo source: Healy Limited Dublin)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE IRA CAMPAIGN AGAINST MONEY-LENDERS

In July 1926, '*An Phoblacht*' drew attention to a sheriff's sale recently carried out in Dublin on behalf of the Commercial Union Loan and Discount Company, 57 Middle Abbey Street. The paper stated that such sales, executed at the behest of moneylenders, had too often passed unnoticed, and it published a document connected with the incident. The editorial declared full sympathy with efforts to interfere in order to save families caught in the grip of the moneylenders. It expressed the hope that those seeking to end usury, and those who had practised it, might come to some understanding that would eliminate the system without violent clashes. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' money-lenders claimed they expected the Free State to protect their interests, while the IRA believed that the lenders had promised to wind up their activities voluntarily. The paper argued that "usury has finally run its course in Ireland," and had urged moneylenders to accept that reality without "undue stubbornness." One money-lender was allegedly quoted as saying:

> *"The IRA say they will end money-lending. The Free State Government say it will end the IRA's interference. I'll sit still and watch that fight. If the Free State wins out, I'll continue to make my easy living. If the IRA wins out, I'll have to work. That's all. Meantime, I'll lie low."*

The communication to the Commercial Union Loan and Discount Company, signed by the O/C of the IRA's Dublin Brigade, read as follows:

> *"**Óglaigh na hÉireann – Irish Republican Army***
>
> *We have been investigating the breaking up of homes by sheriff's sales carried out on behalf of moneylenders. We find that your firm has been guilty of many such acts. You must understand that*

usury is wrong, and that to smash up homes in order to further this wrong is so criminal that one wonders you are tolerated in any community.

Recently you broke up a home by a sale which did not yield more than what would cover incidental expenses. Whatever the risks involved, someone must step in when the right to shelter is being denied to human beings, and I inform you that such interference will be forthcoming.

You are instructed to restore the home you broke up last week. Circumstanced as you are, you should be in a position to make the required restitution within a week.

***SIGNED, O/C DUBLIN BRIGADE**"*

The paper framed the incident as a clear confrontation: the Free State committed to protecting lenders, and the IRA equally committed to ending what it denounced as "a parasitical and criminal trade."[126]

'*An Phoblacht*' reported in August 1926 about further developments in the IRA's campaign against moneylenders. According to the paper, the aim was not to publicise information or create a record, but simply to bring an end to the evil of usury. Some moneylenders, the paper claimed, had refused to discontinue their business, arguing that they were "British subjects" within the British Empire. On that basis, they insisted they were carrying on a legal trade, paying taxes, and therefore entitled to protection. '*An Phoblacht*' noted that they compared their situation with that of British traders in China, suggesting that if they were attacked there, the British state would defend them - and asking why they should not expect the same in Ireland. The paper highlighted what it called one of the most shocking examples of usury: the wife of a Guinness's workman borrowed £7 from a local huckster. For seventeen months she paid 35 shillings a week

[126] *An Phoblacht 30/7/1926*

in interest, yet still owed the original loan. When her husband discovered the situation, he borrowed £7 from a registered moneylender to settle the debt, and then repaid £8 15s. over a number of weeks. '*An Phoblacht*' stated that it had confirmed these facts. The campaign, the paper continued, was emboldening ordinary borrowers. Moneylenders who wished to continue "quietly" had been finding out that people, encouraged by public opinion and the IRA's actions, were refusing to meet their weekly instalments. The '*Irish Statesman*,' commenting on the IRA Army Council's decision to end usury, expressed regret that the campaign so far relied on "brandishing revolvers in the faces of wretched moneylenders." Instead, the paper suggested, the Council ought to devote itself to encouraging the formation of credit societies. '*An Phoblacht*' dismissed this view, remarking that since the '*Statesman*' had become, in its words, "an organ of Free State propaganda," its criticism had carried little weight.[127]

In September 1926, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the IRA's campaign against money-lending had entered a new phase in Limerick city. On the 1st of the month, in broad daylight, two offices were raided - apparently by the same party. All documents and account books connected with moneylending were seized. The proprietors of the premises were each served with a written notice, a copy of which read as follows:

> *"**Óglaigh na hÉireann – Irish Republican Army***
> ***Headquarters, Limerick Brigade***
>
> *Sir, - The Army authorities have decided upon the suppression of the practice of moneylending at usurious rates of interest. This is a parasitical trade, a flagrant social scandal, and an exploitation of the misery and poverty of poor citizens.*
>
> *The bearer has been authorised by me to seize all books, documents, and records in your possession relating to this traffic. These will be confiscated.*

[127] *An Phoblacht 6/8/1926*

This notice also serves as an order to discontinue the trade."

The paper noted that the raids marked an intensification of the IRA's social campaign, aimed at eliminating what it described as a 'scandalous' and exploitative practice. It was also documented that the decision of a mass demonstration in College Green to repudiate all moneylenders' debts has given the campaign a new impetus in Dublin. On the other hand, a few of those recently raided moneylenders, relying on the aid of the Free State Courts, had served some of their alleged creditors with solicitors' notices. Presumably owing to the seizure by the I.R.A. of all promissory notes, the amount of the alleged debt in most cases was not stated. It would also be remembered, in this connection, that the O/C of the Dublin Brigade returned the promissory note to each victim, and stated, in a covering letter, that without the evidence of the promissory note, the moneylender could not sue for the recovery of the alleged debt.[128]

It was reported in June 1927 that Patrick MacDonnell was convicted at the District Circuit Court on a charge of "armed robbery" and was remanded for sentence. MacDonnell, however, refused to recognise the authority of the court. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' he had acted as an IRA Volunteer in securing copies of the jury panel. These documents were required in anticipation of forthcoming trials connected with the organisation's campaign against money-lenders.[129]

In a feature article for the '*Irish Story*' from 2011, Rhona McCord recalls the summer of 1926, when the IRA, primarily in Dublin City, launched a campaign against moneylenders - an episode later overshadowed by allegations of anti-Semitism. McCord notes that the raids must be seen within the wider context of an organisation attempting to reorganise itself and rebuild popular backing during a period

[128] *An Phoblacht 10/9/1926*

[129] *An Phoblacht 3/6/1927*

of decline. Historian Brian Hanley has suggested that, as with earlier IRA campaigns against "imperialist" symbols, the organisation had chosen a target that was both unpopular and unlikely to fight back. Because many of these Dublin moneylenders were Jewish, suspicions of anti-Semitic motivation quickly arose. Tim Pat Coogan later described the operation as showing "a touch of anti-Semitism," though he believed it was at least as much driven by opposition to the practice of money-lending itself as by hostility to Jews. The IRA attacks were primarily concentrated around the Dublin City locality known as 'Little Jerusalem.' Whatever its origins, the campaign soon took on the tone of a moral crusade. The IRA sought to present itself as a protector of Ireland's poorest citizens, portraying the raids as an act of social justice rather than cynicism. The arrest of three IRA members on 7 July 1926 revealed the pattern of these raids. Fiona Plunkett, Domhall O'Donohue, and Mick Price were detained after breaking into the home of Edward Levi of Bloomfield Avenue, Dublin City. The attack took place in daylight, when the three forced entry, handed Levi a letter demanding his account books, and attempted to seize them. Levi managed to escape and raise the alarm. The accused were charged with helping to form an illegal (para) military organisation (the Anti-Treaty IRA), possessing arms and ammunition, and holding treasonable documents - charges that reflected the new state's fear of the IRA acting as a rival authority. During the trial, O'Donohue told the court that exploiting fellow countrymen violated Christian teaching and called for a "new code" for a Christian nation. McCord notes that this emphasis on Christianity could be read as anti-Semitic, equating moneylending with non-Christian, and therefore Jewish, behaviour. The 1926 campaign thus became controversial, not only for its violence but for the suggestion that it combined opportunism, moral posturing, and anti-Semitic undertones.[130] A feature on Ireland by Dr. Rory Miller for the Jerusalem Centre for Security and Foreign Affairs points out that, in the mid-1920s, the IRA's campaign against money-lenders largely centred on Jewish

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[130] *McCord, R (2011). 'The 1926 IRA campaign against Moneylenders.' The Irish Story.*

targets, prompting what he referred to as considerable unease within the local population.[131]

In July 1934, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on a fiery broadcast that captured the fervent anxieties of his age, in which the Irish-American priest, Father Charles E. Coughlin, spoke of what he perceived as the sinister rise of international banking power. He lamented that, in the innocence and simplicity of earlier generations, Americans had remained unaware of the calculated efforts of a small group of financiers who, he claimed, had come to control nearly every ounce of the world's commercial gold - and, by extension, the destiny of nations. According to Coughlin, this financial oligarchy possessed the ability to dictate economic fortune: at their command, the products of labour could rise or fall in value on the "Babylonian market." While presidents had boasted of keeping the nation out of war, he warned that international bankers, through their control of propaganda and politics, could still lead entire peoples "to the slaughter." The movement of their gold, he asserted, determined the opening and closing of factories, the cutting of wages, the spread of poverty, the destruction of value, and even the metaphorical re-crucifixion of Christ "upon the cross between two thieves." Declaring that such economic domination had endured for one hundred and fifty years, Coughlin ended his address with a cry of anguish and faith: "How long, O Lord! How long must it endure?" This statement, delivered by Father Coughlin and published with the imprimatur of Bishop M. J. Gallagher of Detroit, stood as a vivid example of the populist and often controversial rhetoric that characterised inter-war American politics and reflected the deep social unease of the Great Depression era.[132]

Fr. Charles Coughlin, having founded his National Union for Social Justice in 1934, Positioning itself as an alternative to the "rigid poverty of communism" and the "manufactured poverty of capitalism," the NUSJ advocated not only for the

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[131] *Miller, R (2008). 'Ireland's Jews: Past, Present, Future.' Jerusalem Centre for Security and Foreign Affairs.*

[132] *An Phoblacht 21/7/1934*

nationalisation of banking, credit, and currency, but also for the public ownership of power, light, oil, natural gas, and other essential resources. Within a year, Coughlin asserted that the organisation had 8.5 million followers, though membership largely amounted to inclusion in his radio audience and mailing list. The parallel to Coughlin's monetary scheme emerged in Huey Long's plans for redistributing wealth. A lawyer and Governor of Louisana, Long was associated with the political left in the Southern Democratic Party. Despite Fr. Coughlin's proposals, he was a fierce opponent of communism and his anti-Semitism served as Fr. Coughlin's way of linking the twin wrongs of "Bolshevism" and high finance. His campaigning led to the creation of the 'Christian Front,' which in essence was a paramilitary of young working-class Catholics in East Coast cities such as New York and Boston. These groups carried out acts of vandalism and street violence against Jewish shops and individuals. When federal treason charges against Coughlin seemed imminent, the Archbishop of Detroit ordered him to leave the airwaves in late 1941. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Archbishop also directed that Social Justice cease publication. The once-influential figure behind the Union Party then withdrew to his parish, where he remained for the rest of his life.[133] At the height of his influence in the 1930s, the "radio priest" attracted an audience of 30 million listeners, with his Sunday broadcasts aired on dozens of stations across the United States. It's important to remember how significant radio was at the time - broadcast regulation was still in its infancy, and television, let alone the internet, was beyond most people's wildest imagination. According to PBS, Coughlin denied that he was an anti-Semite, despite making remarks such as "when we get through with the Jews of America, they'll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing."[134]

Maud Gonne MacBride's long piece, titled "A World of Destitution Because of Usury", featured in '*An Phoblacht*'

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[133] *Horowitz, D (2024). 'Demagoguery and Depression.' Portland State University.*

[134] *Haberman, C (2022). 'The Father Coughlin Story.' PBS.*

during late July 1934, was a sustained moral, economic and political indictment of modern banking, credit systems and what she called usury - an indictment that mixed vivid on-the-ground anecdotes with broad economic analysis and sharp ecclesiastical critique. She argued that the old moral meaning of "usury" had been hollowed out by capitalism: historically condemned by Church law and by reformation-era sanctions, it had become normal practice as civil law adapted to a rising capitalist system. The result, she insisted, was a world in which money and credit had been severed from real production and human need. She began by defining usury and noting how language had been altered to suit capitalist purposes. Small money-lenders (the "little Shylocks") still operated in shabby offices, she admitted, but the morally weightier problem was the respectable banking establishment - the banks and the Royal Exchange - which had turned credit into a trade in debt and had divorced money from its social function of facilitating the distribution of goods. She therefore called banks "debt or money shops" and labelled major financial centres, explicitly including the Bank of Ireland, as the chief sites of what she called "financial juggling."

To make the human cost concrete she offered a string of eyewitness vignettes. She recalled seeing piles of silver herrings left to rot on Donegal bogland because there was no market, while towns a few miles away were starving; she remembered potatoes left in furrows in Antrim and later truckloads dumped at sea - at the same time that soup kitchens in Dublin and Belfast struggled to feed hungry people. These details illustrated her central claim: the world was not short of food or material goods, but of purchasing power and distribution. Producers were "down-hearted" because the tokens of exchange that should have carried goods into people's hands were withheld or controlled by financial interests. Economically she drew on Marxian language at points - conceding Marx's axiom that "all capital is unpaid labour," but she stressed a complementary point: the consumer was a necessary factor in production. If consumers lacked money or credit, production became worthless and goods were destroyed or dumped. In her

account capitalism had produced a paradox: abundance in production alongside mass destitution, because credit and currency circulated in ways that served speculation, monopoly and the profit interests of bankers rather than the real needs of society. She singled out British sterling and the international financial order as especially culpable. Currency and credit, she argued, were unstable under systems controlled by foreign interests; British control of money aggravated Ireland's vulnerability. The capitalist reliance on individual greed and on financial markets had produced a deadlock: wealth existed in goods and labour but purchasing power and real distribution had been centralised in the hands of a few. Thus the "real wealth of a nation" - its productive output - was being starved by an abstract money system.

Maud Gonne also attacked the moral silence of the Irish Church hierarchy. She pointed out that canonical prohibitions against usury had never truly been rescinded, yet bishops in the crisis of the 1930s denounced Communism and revolutionary politics, while also remaining mute on the organised, systemic crime of usury. She found it scandalous that religious leaders would wring their hands about political radicalism but would not denounce the bankers and money-lenders who were presiding over human suffering. Politically, she had linked individual acts of exploitation to a global financial architecture. She named figures and institutions, such as Montague Norman and the Bank of England among them, as part of a network that bracketed together international financiers and desperate local money-lenders. In an arresting anecdote, she recalled Republican prisoners in Mountjoy seizing records from a money-lenders' office: the gesture served, in her telling, to expose that the real enemy was not lone usurers, but the whole ill-starred system in which they were embedded. She described a grim example of micro-exploitation, such as the dealer who would lend a mother a pound at usurious rates to stave off eviction, to show how the macro-system translated into brutal private predation.

As for remedies, Gonne argued that money and credit must be re-attached to real production and distribution: currency

should reflect and support the real wealth a nation produced rather than become an unstable instrument of speculation. She proposed, implicitly if not in full programme form, that banking and credit needed to be regulated and reoriented so that producers and communities - not speculative interests - got access to purchasing power. She also called for a moral awakening among religious leaders and the public so that usury would be confronted as the systemic wrong it was, rather than allowed to continue under euphemisms. The tone of the article combined moral urgency, practical outrage and political radicalism. Gonne was neither content with mere denunciation nor with abstract theory alone: she used concrete images of rotting food, hungry streets and petty exploitation to drive home the argument that the present monetary system produced actual human ruin. Her conclusion was uncompromising: the technicalities of modern finance masked a form of slavery - the last form, she declared - and if Ireland (and the wider world) were to escape mass destitution, it would require reorganising credit and resisting the power of bankers and foreign currency interests.[135]

An article titled "Slums Clearance Swindle", published in '*Prison Bars*' on 1 August 1937, was a scathing critique of government housing policy and the broader capitalist system underpinning slum clearance and urban redevelopment schemes in Ireland and Britain. The piece drew heavily on an article by Hargraves in the '*National Voice*,' a pro-Social Credit publication, and used his analysis of the "re-housing racket" in Britain as a warning and a parallel for Ireland. The overall tone combined economic criticism with religious and ethical appeals. The article began by quoting Hargraves's denunciation of the "slum clearance racket." It argued that housing reform, ostensibly intended to improve the living conditions of the poor, had instead been turned into a profit-making scheme dominated by the bankers and political manipulators. "Bankers collect the stakes, political intriguers the credit and a rake-off," Hargraves was quoted as saying, while "honest reforming mugs are double-crossed." The

[135] *An Phoblacht 28/7/1934*

piece alleged that financial institutions, rather than social reformers, were the true beneficiaries of slum clearance programmes, as they reaped profits through loans and interest on rehousing projects. The article claimed that debts owed to bankers for housing in London alone amounted to forty-seven million pounds, and that rent from new tenants was used primarily to service interest payments - which the author described as "usury." It emphasised that this financial arrangement kept the new housing unaffordable for the very people it was intended to help. "That is why the rents of the new flats are still beyond the pockets of the people they were intended for," it stated. The supposed promise that the working classes would own their new homes had proven false, since even in the new "workers' dwellings," tenants were still obliged to pay rent and live under financial strain.

The second section, titled "Death in the New Homes," cited the findings of Dr G. M. G. McGonigle of Stockton, who had studied health conditions on the Mount Pleasant Estate, a newly built council housing scheme in the heart of England. McGonigle's research, it was reported, revealed a shocking 46 per cent increase in the death rate among residents in the new flats compared to those who had lived in the old slums. The article explained that this was because the higher rents of the new houses forced tenants to spend less on food and other various essentials. Numerous working-class families, particularly housewives, had to cut back on meals in order to afford rent, leading to widespread undernourishment. "Grown-up people half-starved themselves to feed their children," it said, suggesting that slum clearance had actually worsened, rather than improved, the conditions of the poor. The author stressed that working people did not live in "damp, vermin-infested stink-holes" by choice, but because they could not afford better housing. The piece condemned the hypocrisy of allowing unemployed and able-bodied workers to build luxury flats that they could never inhabit. It argued that under a Social Credit system, which advocated for reform of credit and monetary policy, workers would finally have the purchasing power to buy the goods and homes they produced. The Social Credit movement, which had a modest following in inter-war Ireland, believed that

economic depression and poverty were caused not by scarcity, but by the artificial restriction of credit by banks.

The final section, titled "Break Free from Debt," applied the same critique to Ireland. It called for the repeal of the Currency Act of 1927, which had established the Bank of England as the Central Bank of Ireland and controller of Irish currency and credit. The author accused both major Free State political parties of betraying national interests by accepting British control over Irish financial policy. According to the article, Ireland's dependence on the Bank of England allowed British financiers to dictate credit conditions and thereby to stifle domestic prosperity. The piece insisted that credit should be issued directly by the Irish government for the benefit of its people, free from interest charges. The author then invoked religious authority, citing the Pope's teaching that credit is "the life-blood of the nation" and should be used for the needs of the people, not the enrichment of financiers. He argued that governments had a moral duty to take control of credit creation and to direct it toward the public good. Under such a system, money could be issued "free of interest" to fund housing, industry, and employment. This, the article claimed, would allow Ireland to build decent homes and provide work for the 100,000 unemployed, who were described as "forbidden to obey God's command to earn by their labour enough to support themselves and their children."

The overall message of the article was that the capitalist financial system had turned well-meaning social reform into exploitation. The supposed improvement of working-class life through slum clearance was exposed as a deception that enriched bankers and worsened poverty. The piece presented Social Credit as the only just and Christian alternative, promising to restore control of credit to the people and to ensure that labourers could afford the fruits of their own work. The combination of economic populism, Catholic social teaching, and nationalist rhetoric gave the article a distinctive moral tone: it was not merely a critique of economic injustice but a call for Ireland to assert financial independence, end usury, and establish a social system

grounded in both Christian and national principles. In sum, '*Prison Bars"* "Slum Clearance Swindle" argued that the modern housing programme, far from liberating the poor, had trapped them in deeper debt and deprivation. It used the examples of England's failed rehousing projects to warn that similar policies in Ireland would only perpetuate dependence on bankers and foreign control. The article's conclusion demanded economic sovereignty and the abolition of interest-based credit as the first step toward a truly free and moral Irish nation.[136]

An article excerpt from an April 1938 critique (signed "UISNEACH") in the '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' decried the enforcement of societal "uprooting" by "genteel dastards," who were descendants of the original "un-genteel dastards" responsible for it (through the famine) in 1847. It argued that such figures held power regardless of whether alien or native governments were in office, as they controlled the levers of influence. A key reference was to the Rev. Dr. P. Coffey of Maynooth University, who had described all modern governments as having surrendered the "whole money system" to private citizen groups for an essential purpose: subverting the system for anti-social ends. This had resulted in a monopoly that consolidated economic and political power, dominated society, and was cited in Pope Pius XI's encyclical '*Quadragesimo Anno*' for explicitly highlighting this international finance world-monopoly and its disastrous consequences. One major consequence was the effective enslavement of states (i.e., all modern governments and political organisations worldwide) to a super-state plutocracy, whose usurped and wielded power stemmed from monopolistic financial control. The piece concluded with a call to action: rather than allowing themselves to be uprooted by this brazen financial plutocracy, people were urged to uproot it themselves.[137]

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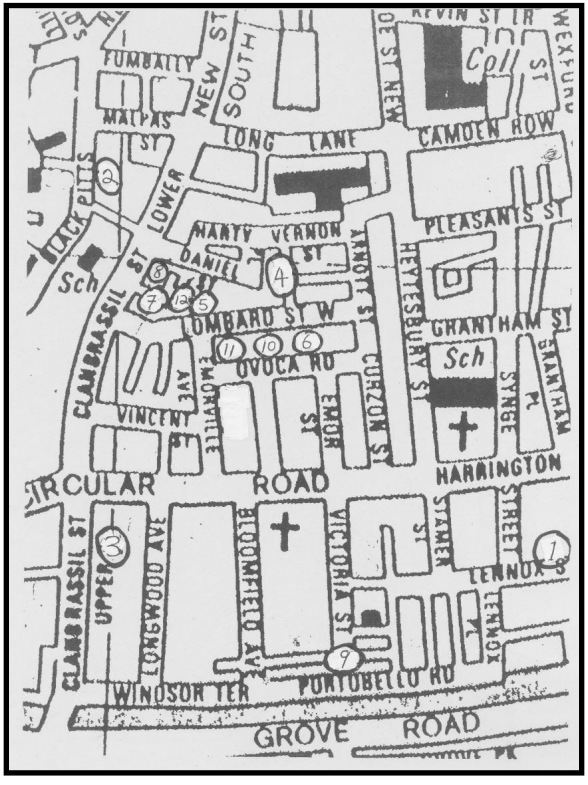
[136] *Prison Bars 1/8/1937*

[137] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 30/4/1938*

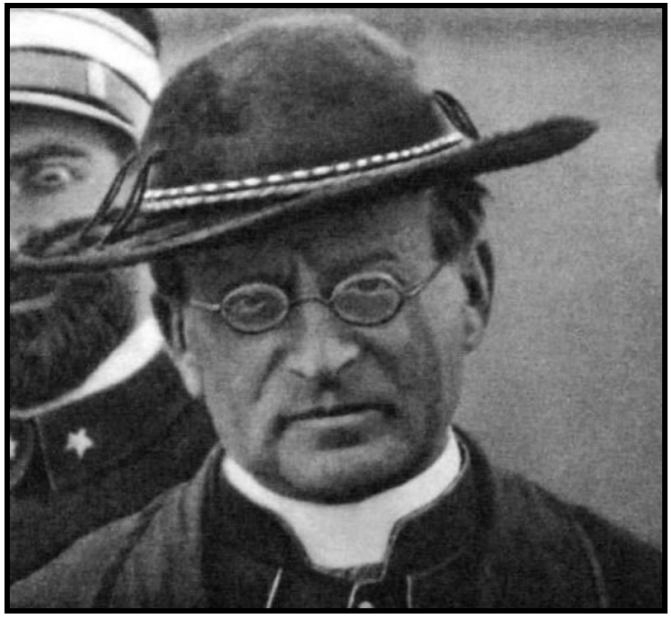
A '*Republican Review*' magazine article from May 1939 had urged the Irish people to reclaim control of their own financial destiny. It condemned the subservience of the Irish Free State to the Bank of England, arguing that true independence meant control of national credit - the lifeblood of production. The writer (on this occasion, Maud Gonne MacBride) had drawn heavily on '*Quadragesimo Anno,*' the Papal encyclical issued by Pope Pius XI, which denounced the concentration of money and credit in the hands of a few financiers. The article accused the Fianna Fáil government of hypocrisy for allowing copies of that very encyclical to be confiscated and burned, despite its alignment with Catholic teaching and the religion that it claimed to support. In striking contrast, the piece had pointed to Nazi Germany's financial policy under Hitler, which it said was based on production rather than debt. While acknowledging that Republicans did not, in his opinion, share Nazi ideology, the writer argued that Ireland could learn from Germany's rejection of international usury. The '*Republican Review*' denounced the Bank of England as the "Central Bank of Ireland," claiming it had transformed credit into a system of perpetual debt. The article traced the origin of this debt system to 1694, when private financiers lent to the English crown and then created money on the security of that loan - the beginning of credit based not on work or goods, but on debt itself. According to the paper, the same structure had been replicated in Ireland in 1782, binding the nation's productivity to British financial control. Debt, it said, had become "the breath of life to banks," yet "a millstone" around the necks of Irish farmers and workers. The article concluded that Ireland must emulate Germany's focus on productive credit to revive its economy and free its people from "debt and anxiety." It condemned high interest as a form of modern usury contrary to Christian teaching and claimed that even modest rates became immoral when they "strangled production" and kept thousands unemployed. In essence, this other non-constitutional Republican publication presented financial sovereignty as the missing cornerstone of national independence. Without control of credit, she

asserted, political freedom remained an illusion - for Ireland was still paying Great Britain to use its own money.[138]

[138] *Republican Review 1/5/1939*



The IRA's anti-moneylender campaign of the mid-1920s in Dublin was primarily carried out in the 'Little Jerusalem' area.
(Photo source: 'Educational Jewish Aspects of James Joyce's "Ulysses"' [1992])



Some publications such as the 'Republican Review' and 'Wolfe Tone Weekly' cited the encyclicals of Pope Pius XI to support their views on the need for monetary reform.
(Photo source: University of Notre Dame)

The monetary reform rhetoric of the radical Irish-American radio priest, the Rev. Fr. Charles Coughlin, was referred to in 'An Phoblacht'. He was closely associated with the left-Democrat governor of Louisiana State, Huey Long. Father Coughlin was later known for mobilising anti-Semitic devotees, and was forced to retreat to a quiet life as a parish priest by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Detroit.
(Photo source: ssa.gov)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

London Printed for Bowles & Carver, No. 69, St Paul's Church Yard
A View of the BANK of ENGLAND, Threadneedle Street, London.
The Centre erected 1733. G.Sampson, Architect.
Sir Robert Taylor Knt. Architect of the Wings.

Non-constitutional Republican commentary during the 1920s and 1930s saw the Imperial money system of the City of London as a major contributor to Ireland's ongoing economic woes.
(Photo source: Bank of England, 1797)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE

In its front-page feature 'Against Imperialist War,' published on 31 December 1927, '*An Phoblacht*' presented and supported the views expressed by the Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union, framing them as a rallying call to workers and oppressed peoples worldwide. The paper emphasised that the Congress had openly declared its opposition to imperialist war and its solidarity with the Soviet Union and revolutionary China. '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the Congress had gathered representatives from a wide spectrum of society - including workers, peasants, co-operatives, those from various communities oppressed by imperialism, and professionals in science, art, education, and culture - as well as social democrats, non-party communists, and members of national revolutionary movements. The Congress, held in Moscow to mark the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution, had considered it a duty to issue a global warning against aggression toward the Soviet Union. The paper highlighted that the Congress regarded war against the Soviet Union as a "shameful counter-revolution" and the greatest crime against toiling humanity. It argued that such a war was not only an attack on the Soviet Workers' State but a war against the working class and peasantry globally, serving the interests of landowners, capitalists, and reactionary forces. The Congress claimed that imperialist aggression against the USSR threatened to destroy the achievements of science, culture, technology, and art accumulated over thousands of years, and would reinforce the most reactionary international forces while crushing the labour movement and the struggle for freedom of oppressed peoples worldwide.

'*An Phoblacht*' further explained that the Congress had called on all honest opponents of war, all workers by brain and hand, to take up a "ruthless fight" against preparations for war on the Soviet Union and against any attack on the proletarian dictatorship, irrespective of the ideological or political disguises under which such attacks might occur. The paper emphasised that the Congress had condemned the League of Nations as a "fighting alliance of the great capitalist robber States," organised primarily against the

Soviet Union and in opposition to socialism and the proletarian state. The Congress had drawn historical parallels, asserting that Britain, as in the early nineteenth-century European bourgeois revolutions, had led counter-revolutionary coalitions against revolutionary France and now headed what it called a "Holy Alliance" of capitalist states preparing to attack what it regarded as the first Workers' Republic. '*An Phoblacht*' highlighted that the Congress had pointed to a series of aggressive acts and threats by imperialist powers, including Britain's break with the Soviet Union, the violence and executions of revolutionary leaders in China, the recall of the Soviet Ambassador from France, incitement against the proletarian state in the press, acts of terror, massive armaments build-ups, and the diplomatic, financial, and economic encirclement of the USSR. Despite these threats, the Congress had commended the Soviet Union for its policy of peace, crediting the USSR's firm will for peace with having prevented the outbreak of war. The Congress also endorsed the Soviet Government's initiative at the Disarmament Conference convened by the League of Nations, where it had proposed a genuine programme of peace and disarmament, demonstrating the USSR's commitment to avoiding conflict despite ongoing imperialist provocations. Through this feature, '*An Phoblacht*' presented the Congress's positions as central to the international struggle against imperialism and capitalism. The paper framed the opposition to war against the Soviet Union as inseparable from the broader revolutionary struggle, emphasising that defending the Workers' State abroad was linked to the defence of the working class and oppressed peoples at home and globally. By reproducing the Congress's statements in detail, the IRA-affiliated paper reinforced its view that international solidarity, active opposition to imperialist aggression, and support for socialist states were essential components of the revolutionary agenda it promoted in Ireland.[139]

In its August 1929 report on the Second World Congress of the International League Against Imperialism and for

[139] *An Phoblacht 31/12/1927*

National Independence, held in Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany, during July, '*An Phoblacht*' highlighted the participation of IRA leaders Sean MacBride and Peadar O'Donnell as the representatives of Irish revolutionary interests. The paper emphasised that, following their statements on conditions in Ireland, the Congress passed several resolutions concerning British rule on the island. '*An Phoblacht*' presented the Congress's view that British authority in Ireland was exercised through two separate agencies: the Government of Northern Ireland and the Government of the Irish Free State. Both governments were portrayed as instruments of imperial control, imposed on the Irish people through war and sustained by the constant threat of immediate and severe military enforcement. The Congress, as reported by '*An Phoblacht*,' called on organised workers in Great Britain to pressure the British Labour Government to remove this threat of war and to allow Ireland to organise her political, social, and economic life freely according to working-class ideals.

The paper highlighted that the Congress extended its solidarity to Irish men and women imprisoned in Ireland and England for their participation in the national struggle, demanding their immediate release. It also protested against the treatment and torture inflicted upon Irish Republicans by the armed forces enforcing British rule, framing these acts as part of a broader imperialist system of repression. '*An Phoblacht*' underscored the Congress's recognition that Ireland had made three independent revolutionary efforts in the previous thirteen years to break the connection with England, without external assistance, and noted the League's pledge that any future revolutionary efforts by Irish organisations would receive its "whole-hearted backing." Finally, the paper recorded that a detailed discussion on Ireland had taken place during the Congress, involving both O'Donnell and MacBride, demonstrating the international dimension of Irish revolutionary activism. By reporting this event in depth, '*An Phoblacht*' presented the League Against Imperialism's resolutions as an authoritative endorsement of Irish anti-imperialist struggle, framing the work of Irish

revolutionaries within a global context of organised opposition to colonial and capitalist domination.[140]

In a September 1929 front-page feature, titled "The Truth About Palestine," '*An Phoblacht*' reported on an article published in The Sunday Worker by R. Bridgeman, Secretary of the British Section of the League Against Imperialism. The paper highlighted Bridgeman's analysis of the political situation in Palestine, presenting it as closely analogous to the "Ulster Question" in Ireland. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' Bridgeman argued that the conflict between Islamism and Judaism in Palestine was fostered deliberately, in the same way that tensions between Catholics and Protestants were inflamed in North-East Ireland. The paper emphasised that Bridgeman portrayed both Jewish and Arab workers as oppressed under imperialist structures, drawing a direct parallel with the exploitation and sectarian divisions experienced by Catholic and Protestant workers in Belfast. '*An Phoblacht*' noted that even militant unionist groups, such as the Orangemen in Ireland, had counterparts in the "Zionist fascist" movement in Palestine, which, as a tool of British imperialism, was enforcing control over the Arab population and securing Palestine for imperial interests. By reproducing Bridgeman's analysis, '*An Phoblacht*' reinforced its broader view that imperialism deliberately manipulated religious and ethnic divisions to maintain political and economic control, both in Ireland and internationally. The paper framed the situation in Palestine as part of a global pattern in which working-class populations were exploited and pitted against each other by imperialist powers, highlighting the shared struggles of oppressed peoples worldwide and linking Irish republican anti-imperialist activism to international solidarity movements.[141]

In October 1930, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that thousands of Dublin citizens had gathered at the Mansion House on the evening of Wednesday 24 September that year to show

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[140] *An Phoblacht 10/8/1929*

[141] *An Phoblacht 7/9/1929*

solidarity with the Indian people in their struggle against British imperialism. The Round Room had been filled to capacity and a lively overflow meeting had formed in the street outside. The meeting, organised by the Irish Section of the World League Against Imperialism, had been described as the largest and most fervent assembly the Mansion House had seen since before the Treaty. The principal speaker that night was Mr Krishna Deonarine and a panel of Irish speakers was listed to support the event. Krishna Deonarine had been introduced by Seán MacBride and addressed the meeting on behalf of revolutionary India. He had first sent revolutionary greetings to Ireland and said the victory of Indian insurgents at Chittagong proved that international advice and solidarity were already having an effect. He declared that England and India were at war and that the Indian people would not remain within the British Empire while the British held them by force and threat. He complained that the volunteers of the Indian Revolutionary Army were denied belligerent rights and were not treated as soldiers of war. Deonarine had recounted recent violent incidents as evidence of British brutality and of Indian resistance. He noted that two British police inspectors had been shot and that the imperialist press had presented those shootings as "dastardly assassinations." He reminded listeners that the police chief who had been shot had presided over an administration under which the Mayor of Calcutta and the Indian Republican leader Subhas C. Bose had been brutally beaten while handcuffed in a Bengal prison. Subhas Bose had been beaten into unconsciousness and the Lord Mayor had been so badly ill-treated that he had lost a great deal of weight. On a more hopeful note, Deonarine had said he had been cheered to hear that peace negotiations had broken down, because their collapse had signalled, to his mind, that India had finally asserted its nationhood. He argued that once a nation's soul was aroused and it recognised nationhood, no reactionary force could permanently prevent its freedom. He emphasised that many Indians were prepared to endure suffering, imprisonment and even death in order to secure independence, and he observed that prison walls and the fear of death had lost their power to deter. He explained that masses of Indian men, women and

children were willingly risking imprisonment under Gandhi's creed of non-violence, remaining non-violent in spite of severe provocation. Deonarine had warned that extreme pressures from imperialists in England and the North of Ireland were urging governments to adopt repressive measures in India. Yet he argued that patience would run out and that the youth of India might resort to increasingly effective and natural means of resistance. He predicted that Indians would strike, retaliate and make conditions untenable for any Englishman who tried to remain in India. He praised Mahatma Gandhi as one of the greatest modern leaders, noting Gandhi's journey from lawyer and advocate to organiser and, in effect, to a republican figure inspiring national consciousness and reviving cottage industry. Deonarine had suggested that Gandhi might ultimately evolve further into a more revolutionary role. He also highlighted the growing emancipation of Indian women, noting that they were emerging from purdah and zenana, entering professions and public life, serving in legislative councils, and even volunteering to serve and suffer alongside men in the Indian Revolutionary Army. Deonarine had called on Ireland to recognise parallels between the Indian and Irish struggles. He pointed out that Sinn Féin sought an Irish Republic just as the Indian Congress sought an Indian Republic, and argued both movements aimed to recover their ancient culture and revive languages and civilisation - in India's case the promotion of Hindustani as a lingua franca. He said the principal enemy in both countries remained British imperialism and urged Irish republicans to support united international action. He challenged Irish people to be more than passive commemorators of past heroes; if they truly wished to honour figures such as Wolfe Tone, Emmet and Pearse they needed to actively pursue the ideals for which those men had died.

A panel of Irish speakers who had been listed to appear at the meeting included Peadar O'Donnell, Seán Murray of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington acting for the Irish Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Alec Lynn B.L., Helena Molony of the Irish Women Workers' Union, Jim Larkin

Junior of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and Proinsias Ó Ríain, editor of An Phoblacht. Photographs and captions at the page's centre had shown several Indian activists. Mrs Kamala Chattopadhyaya was described as having received six months' imprisonment for her activities in demonstrations organised in Bombay, particularly by the Indian Youth League. Jawaharlal Nehru (referred to as "Nehru the Younger") was described as President of the Indian National Congress and a prominent leader who served on the Executive Committee of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence. Mrs Suhashini Nambiar was noted as a member of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and as having been the president of the first congress of the Revolutionary Youth League, an organisation the government had just declared illegal. A photograph of Gandhi appeared with a caption describing him as the organiser and leader of the pacifist Non-Co-operation Movement who had been interned; the caption also stated that India had moved from passive resistance to more militant methods instead.

A formal resolution was read and printed in a box at the foot of the central column. The resolution declared Dublin citizens' solidarity with the Indian masses in their struggle against British imperialism and its Indian allies. It urged Indian comrades to learn from Ireland's experience of a betrayed revolution and warned them to guard against the pitfalls that had halted Irish progress. The meeting saluted the Indian Revolutionary Army, honoured those who had suffered at the hands of British troops - naming prisoners languishing in Meerut and other jails - and called on Irish labouring masses worldwide to recognise that Imperial Britain was at war with Revolutionary India and that revolutionary Ireland's loyalty should be set against Imperial Britain. Peadar O'Donnell proposed the printed resolution and explained its simple, clear purpose: to declare solidarity between Dublin's working masses and revolutionary India. He argued that British rule in India existed primarily as a mechanism by which the British ruling class exploited Indian labour and industry. Some Indian collaborators had assisted British exploitation, but the masses had grown weary of being treated as an industrial commodity and had risen in

revolt. O'Donnell said that although the British ruling class tried to conceal the fact that open conflict raged, it was obvious that a war of resistance was underway and that the British attempted to misrepresent the Indian masses as loyal to their oppressors. He accused the British of portraying the resistance as the work of a few extremists whose elimination would restore order. O'Donnell insisted that while the war continued there were practical tasks for Irish supporters. They needed to educate and mobilise their own people about the Indian struggle so that British workers and the Irish diaspora in Britain would understand the theft under which Indian workers suffered. He argued that the Labour Government in Britain was the most useful agent of the British ruling class, because it prevented a stronger opposition from speaking on behalf of workers. He urged Irish workers living in Britain, many of whom were members of the British Labour Party, to bring the conflict into the Labour camp and to oppose the policies of "Ramsay & Co." He also said Irish experience should be studied carefully by Indian masses; at a certain point Indian capitalism might attempt to secure "Dominion Home Rule" as it sought to co-opt the movement. Irish experiences could not prevent tragedies like Amritsar, but they might prevent the repetition of some domestic outrages such as Ballyseedy. He called on Irish workers abroad, in Australia, New Zealand and America, to use their influence and publicity to back the cause of Revolutionary India.

Seán Murray had warned that middle-class leaders such as Gandhi posed a danger to the Indian revolution if their leadership led to betrayals similar to those Murray believed had happened in the Irish revolution under Collins and Griffith. Murray argued that the struggle of India's toiling millions was the same struggle as that of Irish workers and peasants. He said the main enemies of India's freedom were represented at home by the Free State and Belfast governments and abroad by Irish capitalism, which he claimed was already sharing in the spoils of imperial exploitation in the form of interest on money invested there. He declared that the way to help the Indian masses was to

rally the Irish toilers in a struggle against the two imperialist Governments in Ireland.

Miss Helena Molony had warned meeting attendees about the danger of a betrayal of the Indian cause and had urged restraint in criticising India's chosen leaders. She had argued that if those leaders ever failed their people, the Indian masses themselves would judge them; it was not for a nation that had been long oppressed, disgraced and partitioned to pass hasty judgement. Molony had suggested modest practical gestures of solidarity - for example, sympathetic strikes against British goods and had reminded the audience that, although India was distant, Ireland lay close to the heart of the British Empire, and that striking economically at that centre would be significant. Proinnsias Ó Ríain had echoed the call for solidarity. Speaking partly in Irish, he had made the point that the most effective help Ireland could offer India was steadfast support for India's freedom. He had rejected criticism of Indian leadership as misplaced, reiterated that the Indian people wanted freedom, and argued that they deserved the sympathy and active support of Irish people. He had noted with approval that India was moving beyond mere defensive non-co-operation - that tactics which had demonstrated great moral courage were being followed by more offensive action - and he urged that those who truly supported India should give practical backing, not faint praise. He had insisted that Irish revolutionaries should follow the practical example set by Indian activists. The meeting had received several messages of solidarity from abroad. The International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism in Berlin - represented by Muenzenberg and Chattopadhyaya - had sent warm fraternal greetings, praised Irish masses fighting against imperialism and proclaimed "Long live free Ireland - long live free India." The Dublin Section of the Irish Labour Defence League had also sent a message: its Acting-Secretary had conveyed the section's heartfelt greetings and asked that messages of hope and support be conveyed to Indian worker representatives. That communication had asserted that Britain's hold on India sustained imperial exploitation worldwide, and that the overthrow of British rule in India would liberate oppressed

masses globally; it pledged sympathy, enthusiasm and support for India's struggle. Michael Fitzpatrick had written to excuse his absence, explaining that he had been detained on urgent business. He had used his message to align himself with the meeting's aims, encouraging Irish support for India's efforts to throw off British rule. Fitzpatrick had observed that a struggle confined only to passive resistance, while important and worthy of study, would not fully satisfy militant Irish republicans; he believed that only determined, disciplined and armed insurrection could finally break occupation. He had expressed the hope that the meeting would welcome the younger Indian movement into direct struggle to free their people and to bring about the downfall of the British Empire. Finally, it was noted that Peadar O'Máille had sent his regrets because illness had prevented him from attending. He had wished the gathering well and had urged those present to take concrete steps so that Irish sympathy for India would be converted into real action.[142]

Later that month, an article from '*An Phoblacht*' reported on a large anti-imperialist meeting held in Cork City the previous Sunday, showing solidarity between Ireland and India in their shared struggle against British imperialism. The event, held in the Coliseum, was described as every bit as impressive as a similar meeting recently held in Dublin. Cork was called "Rebel Cork," a term evoking its republican tradition, and the crowd was portrayed as deeply committed to international anti-imperialist solidarity. Mr. Seán Martin presided over the meeting and formally welcomed Mr. Krishna Deonarine, who was introduced as a representative of the Indian people engaged in their fight for freedom from the British Empire. Martin proposed a resolution identical to one adopted at Dublin's Mansion House rally, pledging Irish support for India's liberation struggle. The resolution was seconded by Mr. Seán Buckley and supported by Mr. Seán Lysaght, who spoke on behalf of Cork's workers, reinforcing the link between Irish labour and international anti-imperialist causes. The next section of the article summarised the speech given by Mr. Peadar O'Donnell, who delivered a

[142] *An Phoblacht 4/10/1930*

fierce denunciation of what he called the treacherous leadership of Tom O'Connell and others, such as Cosgrave and McGilligan. O'Donnell accused these figures of trying to harness Irish workers and farmers into serving the British ruling class. He argued that the economic pressures of the day were being forced onto the shoulders of working farmers and town labourers, both in Ireland and in India. He drew parallels between the two countries, noting that in India the peasantry were refusing to pay taxes and that town workers were striking against intolerable conditions. The growing militancy of Indian peasants and workers, he said, was comparable to that seen in Ireland, though he noted that the Indian struggle also involved a restless professional and middle class - groups that, while useful, could falter and halt the struggle when personal advancement was at stake. O'Donnell emphasised that India should learn from Ireland's experience: that progress required unyielding militancy, not compromise or reliance on self-interested leaders. Following O'Donnell, Mr. Krishna Deonarine was reported to have received a thunderous ovation. His address powerfully declared that India was determined to break completely from the British Empire. He stated that Britain might "jail, hang and slaughter," but could never destroy the Indian spirit of freedom, which had become a passion and a faith among the people. He said that India preferred death to living as slaves, and that revolutionary India repudiated the "renegade Indians" attending the British-organised Round Table Conference in London. Deonarine denounced the Free State ministers who were simultaneously in London, meeting with British officials to discuss ways of defending the Empire even as oppressed nations like India and Egypt were rising against it. He proclaimed that true revolutionary India was moving steadily towards the goal of a free Indian Republic and called on Ireland to see its own liberation as part of a global anti-imperialist awakening. Next, Miss Máire Nic Shuibhne addressed the crowd, drawing a direct connection between the Irish and Indian struggles. She warned that if India accepted half-measures on the road to freedom, it would repeat Ireland's mistake. The Irish, she said, had also been learning that any compromise with imperialism was fatal: "There is no such thing as a measure of freedom." She

declared that if Irish republicans were offered full independence tomorrow on the condition of helping England to crush India, they would refuse - "No!" she said emphatically - because as long as any country remained unfree, it was Ireland's duty to stand in solidarity with it. The article concluded with a short note titled "The Irish Worker." It recalled that the '*Irish Worker*' newspaper, edited in earlier years by the hard-left Jim Larkin, had once been a powerful voice for the Irish working-class. The piece welcomed its reappearance under Larkin's direction, calling it a "great omen of Irish resurgence." It praised the paper for speaking in the authentic voice of Irish workers, and celebrated its revival as a sign that the revolutionary labour movement was regaining its strength.[143]

At the turn of November 1930, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on a protest statement issued by the Executive Council of the Irish Labour Defence League (I.L.D.L.). The had statement condemned what it described as an ongoing campaign of raids, arrests, and intimidation by the Free State government against political opponents, particularly in rural areas. According to the article, these activities had intensified over the previous year, with some anti-Imperialist activists experiencing repeated searches of their homes. One example cited was J. Ryan of Cranny, Co. Clare, whose home was reportedly occupied by the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) for an extended period. In Dublin, the article noted that public protests and legal actions had temporarily curtailed police activity, but that renewed arrests and raids had recently occurred. Individuals were allegedly detained without charge in poor conditions at the Bridewell before being released. The case of Mrs. Donnelly of Rathmines, an I.L.D.L. executive member, was mentioned as an example of these raids. The I.L.D.L.'s statement called on trade unions, workers' organisations, and anti-Imperialist groups to protest against what it termed police oppression, and to pass resolutions expressing opposition to the

[143] *An Phoblacht 18/10/1930*

government's actions. The IRA's newspaper endorsed them.[144]

In August 1931, an article in '*An Phoblacht*' stated that the Indian people had resolved to free their country from the brutal rule of British imperialism and from the oppression of their own native elites - the landlords (zemindars), capitalists, moneylenders, and princes. Despite the terror and repressive policies of the British Labour Government, and despite what it called Gandhi's betrayal alongside the Congress leadership, India's masses - particularly its youth - had continued their determined struggle for freedom. As the movement grew, British imperialism realised it could no longer rule India alone and sought to share power with local Indian exploiters. The native ruling class, threatened by the revolutionary mood of the people, agreed to cooperate with the British in order to protect their privileges. The Indian National Congress, representing the interests of the Indian capitalist and landowning classes, had, according to the article, entered into a disgraceful agreement between Gandhi and the Viceroy, beginning a campaign to crush the revolutionary struggle. The article urged India's youth to continue the anti-imperialist movement with a clear revolutionary programme, demanding:

- The complete overthrow of British imperial rule and the removal of its influence from the nation's economy.
- The abolition of the princely states and landlordism.
- The redistribution of land to peasants through the forced expropriation of exploiters and the cancellation of rural debts.
- The creation of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic.
- It also called for specific goals for young people to make the anti-imperialist fight part of their everyday struggle:
- A shorter working day for young labourers.
- Equal pay for equal work between adults and youth.
- A ban on child labour, with the State taking responsibility for the welfare of children.

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[144] *An Phoblacht 1/11/1930*

- Free, universal education up to age 16, provided in native languages and accompanied by free meals, clothing, textbooks, and supplies funded by the State.
- Vocational training at the expense of both the State and employers.
- Paid annual leave for young workers.
- State benefits for unemployed youth that matched the cost of living.

The piece in '*An Phoblacht*' also strongly criticised Gandhi for supposedly betraying Indian soldiers and police officers who had refused to shoot at their fellow countrymen during workers' demonstrations. Gandhi's agreement, it claimed, had left these soldiers imprisoned. The article urged Indian soldiers not to be deceived by British imperialism and to recognise that their real interests lay with the working people. They were called upon to win over other soldiers and, when the time came, to use their military skills for India's liberation. It warned young workers, peasants, and students not to be misled by the Congress Party's non-violent propaganda, but to form self-defence groups to protect strikes and demonstrations. The article also accused the British Government of preparing for war by building forts, airfields, highways, and railways - not only to crush the Indian revolutionary movement, but also to wage war against the Soviet Union. It predicted that Indian youth would be mobilised to fight on behalf of British imperialism. '*An Phoblacht*' concluded by calling on Indian youth to join with revolutionary workers and peasants around the world in opposing British militarism and resisting preparations for imperialist war.

In the same issue, an article called 'Red Aid Appeals for Political Prisoners,' the Executive Council of the I.R.A. had issued an appeal to workers across all nations, urging them to protest against the brutal treatment inflicted on political prisoners in numerous countries. The statement particularly emphasised the harsh and inhumane conditions endured by prisoners in Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Italy. In alleged fascist-controlled Poland alone, it was reported that over 10,000 political prisoners were suffering

under the new prison regime introduced by the Pilsudski government, which subjected them to the same harsh treatment as ordinary criminals. In Latvia, a new penal law had been established that was described as even more severe than the former tsarist code. Meanwhile, in Finland, revolutionary workers who had narrowly escaped death at the hands of fascist terror were being treated as common robbers and bandits. The article stated that the global increase in the harshness of prison regimes reflected the terroristic policies of the bourgeoisie, who were aligning themselves with fascism in an attempt to suppress the growing tide of revolution. Defenceless political prisoners were said to be resisting this inhuman treatment with great courage, engaging in hunger strikes and protests. Their struggle, the I.R.A. declared, should inspire solidarity among workers everywhere - urging the international working class to rise in defence of their imprisoned comrades and to continue the fight against what it had termed as fascist oppression worldwide.[145]

In July 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that organisers from the Irish Section of the League Against Imperialism had extended a campaign of anti-imperialist meetings that had begun in Dublin and spread to the provinces. They had staged "monster" gatherings in Cork and Sligo and were planning another meeting in Limerick. The Cork meeting, which took place on Saturday 16 July, had been marked by extraordinary enthusiasm; anti-British speeches had been loudly received and, in a dramatic gesture of defiance, members of the audience had publicly burned copies of the '*Cork Examiner*,' a newspaper identified as pro-Imperial. Seán Martin had presided over the large assembly and framed the rally as part of Cork's historic tradition of resistance. He had said the crowd's attendance showed the people's readiness to return "blow for blow" to England and had warned that the meeting was not merely for passing resolutions but served as a clear sign and a threat to British and pro-British interests that a relentless campaign would continue until the British imperial presence had ended. Seán

[145] *An Phoblacht 29/8/1931*

Buckley had proposed a strong resolution urging Cork citizens to sever ties with England: to withhold every penny of tribute to the British Exchequer and to expose and starve out the "hirelings and interests" that obstructed the will of a united and free Ireland. He had argued that the dispute was not about money but about the robber's claim on Irish soil; any short-term unemployment caused by action could be managed, while historically Ireland had received only the scraps of its own produce. Buckley had reminded the audience that their guiding charter of freedom remained the Republic proclaimed in Easter Week, whose principles were immutable. T. P. Dowdall, T.D., had urged resolute action rather than mere rhetoric. He had argued that the conflict with imperialism could be fought by every means, observed that military balance between the sides was closer than at many previous points in history, and stressed that although England struck at Ireland through trade and that Ireland seemed to be "on the run," the country still possessed resources for defence and that its proximity to the land meant it had less ground to fall. The IRA's Michael Price, a delegate from the Anti-Imperialist League Executive, had described the meeting's atmosphere as proof that the humiliations of British intervention would no longer be endured. He had emphasised that the public's resistance was spontaneous and grassroots, not orchestrated by any government, and that local people had, despite hostile press campaigns by papers such as the '*Irish Independent*,' '*Irish Times*' and '*Cork Examiner*,' taken the initiative to boycott British goods. Following his remarks, a section of the crowd had burned copies of the '*Cork Examiner*' to tumultuous applause. He had gone on to argue that even economic boycotts were insufficient: leaders had to heed the popular will - which rejected bargaining or compromise with England and demanded that Ireland withdraw from the Empire entirely.

Labour voices had also been prominent. Jeremiah Hurley, president of the Cork Workers' Council, had proposed a resolution that appealed to British workers to support Irish workers and to press for the withdrawal of all British military and naval forces from Ireland. Hurley had assured organisers that Cork's labour movement would stand firm and

unyielding, and he had insisted that, forced to rely on their own capacities, the Irish people could secure their economic emancipation along the lines advocated by James Connolly. His forceful words had won enthusiastic approval from the meeting. Trade-union representatives, including Seán Good of the N.U.R., had pledged union solidarity with the anti-imperialist cause; Good had warned from his experience of union politics about bluster from opponents such as "Thomas," and pledged that his branches would resist British aggression. Seán Walsh had issued a trenchant appeal for revolutionary measures suited to the revolutionary situation, asserting that an armed and mobilised Ireland could defy Britain's fiercest efforts.

Speakers had urged action from the Irish diaspora as well. Alderman Seán French had moved that Irish communities in America be called upon to institute an energetic boycott of British goods, ships and interests, and to publicly expose imperial exploitation. He had expressed confidence that émigré Irish would carry out the resolution in both spirit and deed. Seán MacSwiney, "speaking as a Republican and member of the IRA," had cautioned that such appeals to exiles were only justified if Ireland herself remained committed to achieving an Irish Republic. Farmers' backing had been asserted by Martin Corry, T.D., who had said that Irish farmers stood as firmly behind the anti-imperialist struggle as they had during the "Tan" era; he had argued that the longer Ireland pursued the clear path out of the Empire, the more fully the rural population would support it. He had even welcomed the fact that, by starting the confrontation, the English had allowed Ireland to complete the fight. The meeting had closed on a nationalist note with the singing of "The Soldier's Song," leaving organisers encouraged by local and labour solidarity and determined to translate rhetoric into sustained, practical resistance.

On the same page, an article from '*An Phoblacht*' criticises Captain J. L. Chichester-Clark, an Ulster Unionist officer and politician, for his remarks against the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The paper defended an address made by the IRA Executive to members of the Orange Order, which had

angered many Unionists. '*An Phoblacht*' claimed that the address's arguments about capitalism and imperialism could not be refuted, rather, only "perverted" by its opponents. It then quoted Chichester-Clark dismissing the IRA's appeal to the small farmers and workers, accusing the IRA of misunderstanding capitalism and imperialism. The Captain had argued that capitalism represented civilisation and progress, while imperialism stood for the unity and prosperity of the British Commonwealth, symbolised by the Union Jack. These definitions were mocked by '*An Phoblacht*.' In summary, the piece was a rebuttal by '*An Phoblacht*' against a British loyalist's defence of capitalism and empire, portraying his statements as distortions of the IRA's anti-imperialist message.[146]

During August 1932, a commentary by '*The United Irishman*' (a pro-Cumann na nGaedhael newspaper) addressed what it presented as an escalating campaign of intimidation directed at political opponents and the press. Referring to a report in the Irish Independent of 16 August, the paper cited a meeting of the League Against Imperialism held in Birr, at which James Galvin, a member of the County Council, had called on the public to remain vigilant regarding the Birr Urban Council. Galvin had reportedly noted that when support for Éamon de Valera and his government was proposed, it failed to receive a seconder. The paper suggested that this episode, while seemingly minor, illustrated a broader and more troubling pattern. It asserted that the League Against Imperialism was closely allied with the IRA and that both organisations were connected to what it described as the Third Bolshevist International. According to the commentary, communist organisations frequently operated under innocuous titles, citing groups such as the Friends of Soviet Russia and the Anti-Imperialist League as examples. It further claimed that the Labour Defence Association existed to promote Bolshevist ideology. The paper maintained that the leadership and membership of the IRA and the League Against Imperialism substantially overlapped, arguing that these bodies functioned in close

[146] *An Phoblacht 23/7/1932*

coordination. '*The United Irishman*' interpreted Galvin's remarks as an implicit warning issued by the IRA to the Birr Urban District Council and to any public body that failed to demonstrate sufficient confidence in de Valera's government. The paper framed this as an example of extra-constitutional pressure being exerted on local government.

Under the heading "I.R.A. or G.P.U.", the paper drew an explicit comparison between developments in Ireland and those in Soviet Russia. It asserted that when Bolsheviks had gained control in Russia, they had established a secret police organisation - the Cheka, later reorganised as the G.P.U. - to suppress opposition. The commentary claimed that the IRA was gradually assuming a similar role in Ireland. It argued that if public bodies failed to pass resolutions supporting the government, they would be warned that the IRA - or, as the paper suggested it might more accurately be called in future, the G.P.U. - was monitoring them. The paper rejected the idea that responsibility for such threats rested with the President of the Executive Council, asserting instead that the government merely tolerated the IRA's actions. It accused senior ministers, including those responsible for Posts and Telegraphs, Defence, Lands, and Fisheries, of publicly branding opponents of the government as traitors. According to the paper, individuals so labelled were placed under implicit threat, with the expectation that they would either conform or face consequences. In a further section addressing the relationship between the President and the press, '*The United Irishman*' noted that de Valera did not deny that warnings had been issued to journalists with his approval. It suggested that he preferred to describe these as warnings rather than threats. The paper argued that journalists refrained from pursuing legal action not because such warnings were lawful, but because the realities of intimidation made prosecution impractical. It maintained that while legal proceedings might theoretically succeed, journalists understood that institutions such as judges, juries, and public bodies were unlikely to resist pressure effectively. The commentary concluded by asserting that the IRA was growing too powerful for public bodies to oppose openly and that councils would be expected to endorse resolutions

expressing loyalty to the President without question. In the paper's view, press freedom and local democracy were being steadily eroded, and the President's "warnings" would ultimately go unchallenged.[147]

In late August 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that an Anti-Imperialist meeting had taken place in Ballinamore, County Leitrim, with Mr John Tom O'Rourke presiding. A parade of IRA Volunteers had marched through the town before assembling at the meeting place. The first speaker, Mr P. J. Neary of Elphin, remarked that while a great public outcry had recently arisen because Irish cattle were barred from the English market, no such outrage had been expressed by the same Imperialists when Irishmen were executed by firing squads in 1922 and 1923. Next to speak was Rev. Father Neary from Tennessee, U.S.A., who declared that the world was observing Ireland's present crisis. He urged the people of Ireland to remain united on a Republican foundation, to stand firm, and to make no compromises. Seán O'Farrell followed, saying that the people's enthusiasm should be harnessed to break not only England's economic control but also its military domination over Ireland. He reaffirmed that the Republican goal remained the complete independence of Ireland from British rule.[148]

In early September 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that the Republican cause in north-east Ulster had grown stronger and more confident, despite years of isolation and suppression. The paper observed that a new leadership was arising, though it would take time to develop. The publication reflected that, had the political and military leaders of 1918–1922 remained steadfast in their posts, their mere presence in their native districts would have had a profound moral effect. Their withdrawal had been seen as defection and had discouraged activity among local Republicans. '*An Phoblacht*' urged that the Six-County Republicans must come closer together through conference

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[147] *United Irishman 20/9/1932*

[148] *An Phoblacht 24/8/1932*

and communication to achieve cohesion, confidence, and understanding, and to develop a clear programme and plan of campaign. The paper argued that the circumstances in the North in 1932 had differed greatly from those of 1922. Imperialism, it said, had suffered serious setbacks and no longer possessed its former aggressive spirit. Industrial decline, widespread unemployment, poverty, and despair about the future had all weakened the Imperial system. These new conditions, the paper maintained, must be taken into account in shaping Republican policy. '*An Phoblacht*' insisted that ending Partition and breaking the Imperial connection required a new approach. Republicans and anti-Imperialists, it declared, must form an alliance with small farmers, wage-earners, and industrial workers. The newspaper predicted that Imperialists would attempt to revive religious divisions to prevent such unity, warning that sectarianism must be fought within every organisation. It maintained that religious bigotry was the great weapon of the Imperialists, and urged anti-Imperialists not to fall into their trap. The paper called on Republicans to reach out to all sections of the people, regardless of religious belief. Finally, '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that Republicans should lead the way in creating a united Republican and anti-Imperialist front. The paper cautioned that results would not come quickly, but that patience and perseverance were required, insisting that this was the right road and the right direction for Ireland's liberation.

Furthermore, in a separate section contained within the same issue, '*An Phoblacht'* asserted that the development of the Fascist or so-called "White Army," occurring without interference from the Fianna Fáil Government, had caused much surprise. The paper argued that this organisation was an undisguised anti-Republican and Imperialist force, led by the Imperial Cumann na nGaedheal party and supported by every Imperialist and reactionary interest in the country. According to the newspaper, its real purpose had been to prevent the re-establishment of the Republic and to maintain England's economic stranglehold over Ireland. The publication contended that the "White Army" was actively encouraging the English in their campaign of penalising

Twenty-Six County exports, hoping to break the spirit of resistance. They believed that a collapse of that resistance would bring about a political stampede and the return of Imperial power. '*An Phoblacht*' claimed that the White Army's use of force was intended to give courage and encouragement to every traitor and reactionary element in Ireland. The paper expressed astonishment that the leading organisers of this "treasonable movement" were allegedly drawing large sums of money from public funds - in effect, from the taxpayers. It asked whether Fianna Fáil would act, noting that many members of the White Army were receiving large pensions, belonged to the "Officers' Reserve" of the Free State Army, and held highly paid public positions through the Appointments Commission. In return, they were said to serve the interests of British Imperialism rather than the Republic. '*An Phoblacht*' further asserted that many of these individuals were in possession of arms legally granted by police permits, while ordinary citizens were denied such rights. The paper noted with alarm reports that weapons were being scattered across the country in private hands. The publication questioned how long Fianna Fáil could continue allowing such circumstances, asking how they could justify taxing the people heavily while simultaneously allowing threats to national liberty and economic independence to grow. The paper drew a parallel with 1922, when the "Imperialist Provisional Government" had, in its view, recruited an army under British approval, leading to the tragic events at the Four Courts. '*An Phoblacht*' warned that what had happened in 1922 could easily happen again in 1932 - asserting that the British Government would gladly arm its supporters in Ireland once more. The article accused Cumann na nGaedheal politicians of preparing the ground for another coup d'état, arguing that their talk of creating a new "tribunal" to prevent the collection of Imperial Tribute was merely a disguise for the re-establishment of British influence. It concluded that the so-called "White Army" was being readied to serve this reactionary cause and would soon be called upon to act. '*An Phoblacht*' compared the situation of 1932 to that of 1922, asserting that the conspiracy between Cumann na nGaedheal and the White Army resembled that of the Provisional Government and Free State Army a decade

earlier. The paper warned that the danger lay not in imagination but in historical repetition, declaring: "It was Merrion Street which made the Four Courts of 1922, and Merrion Street could make another in 1932."[149]

In its issue of 24 September 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' published a strongly worded editorial titled "Crush the Conspiracy!", condemning Mr W. T. Cosgrave's recent speech as an act of arrogant Imperialism. The paper reported that Cosgrave's speech, delivered privately to a carefully selected audience, had demonstrated his role as the chief spokesman of Imperialism in Ireland. His stated goal, according to '*An Phoblacht*,' was to maintain the Irish people in political and economic subjection. The article claimed that banks, importers, shippers, ranchers, and pensioners all stood behind Cosgrave's party, seeking to pressure the British Government to suppress the Irish people and weaken their resistance. Their ambition, the paper said, was to use treachery and defeatism to force a national surrender, restoring British exploitation and control over Ireland. '*An Phoblacht*' insisted that this "conspiracy" had to be exposed and defeated. It accused Imperialists of drawing strength from press influence, particularly through the Independent and Irish Times, which it called anti-Irish agents that helped spread daily treason. Without such outlets, the article argued, Imperialists would be powerless. However, the paper admitted that anti-Imperialists lacked unity and coordination, calling again for a united national front of Republicans and anti-Imperialists. Only through such unity, it said, could Imperialist forces be driven permanently from public life. The editorial reaffirmed that true Irish freedom could only be achieved by the complete defeat of Imperialism and its allies, and by enthroning the Irish people as sovereign. It warned that those content with less than full independence would never lead the nation to freedom. Citing a recent statement by the Fianna Fáil Minister, Mr Sean McEntee, who declared that the Free State Executive would no longer tolerate treason funded by public money, '*An Phoblacht*' expressed cautious approval but demanded decisive action. Such steps,

[149] *An Phoblacht 10/9/1932*

it said, would be supported by the united forces of Irish Republicanism as part of a genuine campaign against British Imperialism. The paper concluded by asserting that Irish Republicans had no loyalty to the Free State or its institutions, but instead to Ireland and its people. It closed with a rallying call: "*The times call for resolute measures. Crush the conspiracy by striking at its head*."[150]

In its issue of 10 December 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on what it described as a secret circular issued by Cumann na nGaedheal headquarters (HQ), which had been published by the '*Derry Journal*.' According to the paper, the circular contained instructions to party loyalists, preparing them for a return to power and promising to reinstate the Coercion Act. It allegedly urged supporters to compile lists of "marked men" and to take action against groups labelled as Communist, including the newly founded Irish Workers' College. The article recalled that the previous year, Cumann na nGaedheal had attempted to rally public support through a campaign for "Christianity," even sending "Yo-Yo" Duffy to the Catholic bishops with supposedly forged documents meant to show that anti-Imperialists sought to destroy "law and order." The result, '*An Phoblacht*' said, was the Bishops' Pastoral Letter and renewed coercive measures, both of which the people had ultimately rejected in the General Election. '*An Phoblacht*' accused Cumann na nGaedheal of forming an alliance with the Army Comrades (or Pensioners) Association, which it described as composed of the worst elements of the Free State Army of 1922–23. The paper claimed this body now defined itself as the enemy of Communism, a label that, in its view, also included Republicanism. The editorial accused the group of being linked - directly or indirectly - to the executions and killings of figures such as Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Frank Lawlor, and Noel Lemass, and of atrocities like Ballyseedy and Countess Bridge. Despite these associations, it said, the organisation now falsely portrayed itself as the "apostles of Faith and Fatherland." The newspaper argued that while the Pensioners' new self-presentation as defenders of religion

[150] *An Phoblacht 24/9/1932*

was absurd, it was also dangerously effective. By concealing their political motives and appealing to religious or non-political bodies, they were said to be gaining influence. '*An Phoblacht*' called for the exposure of the organisation, labelling it a disreputable body aiming to reinforce British-style repression in Ireland. The editorial noted that when '*An Phoblacht*' itself had previously argued that "traitors should not have the right to preach treason," it had been threatened under British law, while the same "right to free speech" was still afforded to Cosgrave and other Imperialist agents. The paper questioned why such liberty was not extended to all. The report went on to describe events in Cork on 28 November 1932, when, according to '*An Phoblacht*,' a group of people, including Catholic Boy Scouts - had marched through the streets armed with hurleys, seeking out a "Communist meeting." When they failed to find one, they allegedly attacked several citizens, one of whom later described the ordeal in a public letter. The paper attributed this violence to members of the Pensioners' organisation, suggesting it was part of their strategy to pose as defenders of religion while suppressing free speech. It added that the group's leaders - Ernest Blythe, General Mulcahy, and others - remained central figures, despite rumours of internal divisions. The article concluded with a sharp condemnation of an alleged double standard on free speech, remarking that in Ireland, "there was free speech for traitors - but only for traitors."[151]

In its front-page commentary of an edition dated 24 June 1933, the pro-Blueshirt newspaper '*United Irishman*' advanced a sustained and highly critical interpretation of contemporary Irish politics, strongly opposing the Fianna Fáil government while promoting Cumann na nGaedheal and the Army Comrades Association (A.C.A.). The paper asserted that a recent meeting addressed by W. T. Cosgrave in Ferns had demonstrated widespread public support for the former governing party. According to the newspaper, the composition of the audience - described as including farmers, labourers, and business interests - was presented as evidence

[151] *An Phoblacht 10/12/1932*

that opposition to Fianna Fáil extended across social classes, particularly in what it characterised as Ireland's most productive agricultural regions. The paper claimed that this display of enthusiasm proved that Fianna Fáil could be removed from power through a sufficiently strong and united campaign. It warned that the country was being driven towards financial and economic disaster under the existing government, and argued that passive reliance on electoral cycles was inadequate. Instead, the newspaper asserted that continuous organisation, public demonstrations, and the mobilisation of opinion were required in order to exert pressure on government deputies. It further alleged that Fianna Fáil intended to retain power through widespread electoral malpractice, accusing government supporters of preparing to use fraudulent votes and systematic personation at future elections.

Turning to matters of commemoration, the '*United Irishman*' announced plans for a forthcoming ceremony honouring Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, and Kevin O'Higgins. The paper stated that the event would be organised primarily by the A.C.A., with participation from city branches of Cumann na nGaedheal. It described the proposed procession through Dublin, including a wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph and a subsequent visit to Glasnevin Cemetery, where further wreaths would be placed at the graves of the three men. The paper emphasised the symbolic importance of these rituals, portraying them as a reaffirmation of the ideals of the Free State's founders. It claimed that the presence of uniformed A.C.A. members would restore the discipline and solemnity of earlier commemorations, while the inclusion of civilians would lend the event a popular and spontaneous character absent from previous official ceremonies. A major portion of the commentary was devoted to a hostile assessment of the Irish Republican Army and its leadership. The paper referred to reports of an I.R.A. gathering at Bodenstown and highlighted the attendance of figures it described as notorious, including Seán Russell, George Gilmore, and Peadar O'Donnell. The newspaper claimed that it had little interest in the full list of attendees, asserting that the presence of these individuals alone was sufficient to demonstrate the

character of the organisation. It portrayed speeches made at the gathering - particularly by Maurice Twomey - as deliberate attempts to deny any association between the I.R.A. and communism, and dismissed such claims as disingenuous.

According to the '*United Irishman*,' these denials were calculated to influence inexperienced young men from rural areas, whom it described as particularly vulnerable to manipulation. The paper alleged that such recruits were being encouraged to disregard episcopal authority and Church teaching, while being reassured that their consciences need not be troubled. It suggested that senior republican figures were privately amused by these performances and did not themselves believe the claims being made regarding the I.R.A.'s ideological purity. The newspaper expanded on this argument by asserting that prominent republicans were in fact well aware of, and involved in, international Communist networks. It alleged that Seán Russell had previously spent time in Moscow and had engaged in discussions with intermediaries referred to as "Mr. X" while travelling in Europe. The paper also cited a letter attributed to Russell, which it stated had been read aloud in Dáil Éireann, as evidence that the I.R.A. leadership was willing to cooperate covertly with foreign Communist interests while concealing this cooperation from the Irish public.

Developing this theme, the '*United Irishman*' argued that hypocrisy was a deliberate and systematic tactic employed by the I.R.A. leadership. It suggested that the organisation had found it impossible to attract young men openly under a communist or irreligious banner, and therefore adopted a public posture of piety and patriotism. According to the paper, once recruits were fully committed, they could then be gradually exposed to radical doctrines at a pace deemed suitable by their leaders. The paper further claimed that internal disagreements had emerged within republican circles regarding how openly Communist ideas should be expressed. It asserted that some leaders believed a mistake had been made in publicly advocating the nationalisation of all means of production and distribution, and that efforts were now

underway to soften or obscure such language. In this context, the '*United Irishman*' criticised writings by Robert Barton in '*An Phoblacht*,' portraying them as attempts to camouflage revolutionary socialist doctrine in order to make it more acceptable to Ireland's predominantly Catholic population. The newspaper rejected the suggestion that such proposals required further explanation, arguing that their meaning was already clear and firmly rooted in long-established socialist ideology.

Continuing this line of attack, the paper asserted that the I.R.A.'s ultimate objective was the establishment of what it termed a "slave state". It claimed that the organisation's leaders retreated into ambiguity whenever public reaction threatened to undermine support, and that forthcoming publications - such as a draft constitution of a proposed Irish republic - were intended to dilute or obscure controversial provisions in advance. According to the newspaper, only careful and discerning readers would be able to perceive the true implications of such documents. Finally, the '*United Irishman*' commented on President de Valera's return from Rome. While acknowledging that a ceremonial salute was appropriate for the head of government, the paper criticised what it characterised as de Valera's inconsistency in maintaining the dignity of his office while abroad, particularly by making partisan political speeches. It suggested that his enthusiasm for ceremonial display stemmed less from respect for state institutions than from a desire for personal acclaim. The newspaper further speculated on the limited nature of the homecoming celebrations, implying that political calculation by party organisers, rather than spontaneous public enthusiasm, explained the form the reception ultimately took.[152]

In a series of columns, '*An Phoblacht*' pursued the IRA's anti-imperialist campaign in August 1933. A long, combative editorial titled 'Smash Treaty Machine' accused Fianna Fáil of running an essentially Treaty-bound government that preserved the institutions of the Free State and thus betrayed

[152] *United Irishman 24/6/1933*

the cause of full Irish independence. The piece insisted that the surrender of 1921 remained the decisive wrong, and argued that those who had accepted the Treaty had displaced genuine republicans: men who once had taken up arms for the nation had been replaced by politicians who now controlled the state machinery and were content to work within it. Fianna Fáil's parliamentary majorities, the article warned, were being used not to break the imperial connection but to stabilise it; rhetorical republicanism was tolerated while practical compromises with the British government and Empire continued. The editorial expressed alarm at manoeuvres by the Fianna Fáil government which had been intended to co-opt or neutralise the Irish Republican Army, describing efforts to outlaw or absorb the IRA as part of a wider campaign by imperial and reactionary forces to eliminate the movement. It rejected Fianna Fáil's claims to represent republican sentiment, charged the party with trying to "steal the fruits" of popular resistance and with offering half-measures that left economic and political dependencies intact, and urged republicans to resist the Treaty system, refuse dilution by parliamentary tactics and maintain independent organisation and readiness to prevent a repetition of past failures.

In a neighbouring article called 'The Blueshirts are Banned,' while it welcomed the government's ban on the Blueshirts, the article insisted the outlawing of a single organisation was only the first and simplest step: the Blueshirts were merely the visible expression of deeper imperial and financial interests which needed to be identified and broken. The mass resentment which had arisen against the Fascist-Imperialist Blueshirts, it said, had crippled their efforts and had forced the Fianna Fáil government to move against them, but the paper warned against complacency - the real problem was not the street formation itself but the capital, reactionary networks and imperial interests that funded, protected and allegedly profited from such movements. Under the sub-heading "Chasing Shadow - Not Substance," the piece criticised any focus on spectacle rather than on the roots of the menace, accusing Fianna Fáil of mounting speech-making campaigns and tactical manoeuvres designed to

deflect attention while leaving the underlying economic and imperial levers untouched. It charged the government with claiming voluntary reform only after popular pressure, and cautioned that unless the financial backers and political protectors of fascism were exposed and defeated the movement would reappear in another guise; republicans were urged to continue organisation, to attack the economic sources of the threat and to ensure the ban was followed by political action against the backers who stood behind the street-level organisation.[153]

In October 1933, '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that it had received numerous letters commending its previous work on the "Pay No Rates" campaign being carried out by the "Imperialist–Rancher" faction. The paper reported that further information had reached it, indicating that the campaign was being conducted on a large scale and accompanied by threats and intimidation. The publication pointed out the hypocrisy of the situation, observing that the so-called "Empire Blueshirts" had been formed "to prevent intimidation," yet their movement appeared to rely on threats of boycott. These threats, '*An Phoblacht*' maintained, were especially evident in certain districts during the harvesting and threshing of grain. The paper reiterated that, as it had stated the previous week, the Imperialist challenge had to be met directly. The first step, it argued, was the prompt payment of rates by all Republicans and anti-Imperialists. The next was to expose those who were organising resistance to the payment of rates, showing that they belonged to the Imperialist and rancher class. '*An Phoblacht*' referred to Barton of Kildare, who had recently appeared before a Free State military tribunal, as an example of this class. The paper described him as representative of those who had always been enemies of the Irish people and of national independence. Barton, it said, had claimed ownership of 1,200 acres of land in Kildare - among the richest land in Europe - yet was unwilling to pay his rates. The newspaper suggested that the Barton family had likely held their land since the time of the English Conquest. If such a man, it argued, could not pay poor rates

[153] *An Phoblacht 26/8/1933*

despite owning such valuable property, that only showed he was a waster. It was, '*An Phoblacht*' contended, high time that land used so poorly was taken from such men and given to those who would till and sustain it properly. The publication described the leaders of the "Pay No Rates" movement as men of the supposed Barton type - ranchers and minor landlords who possessed the mentality of both the slave and the "souper." It argued that these individuals lacked the courage to make genuine sacrifices for Ireland. '*An Phoblacht*' maintained that while the Coercion Act might help to break the Imperialists' "Pay No Rates" campaign, a far more effective measure would be to unleash the hostility of the people against them, as the paper had already urged its readers previously. In another section, '*An Phoblacht*' published an article in its Cumann na mBan lecture series, titled "An Answer to Critics of Republicanism – When Popes Preach Real Freedom." The piece sought to counter accusations that Republican ideals were in conflict with Catholic teaching, and to demonstrate that the principles of social justice espoused by Irish Republicans were consistent with Christian social philosophy as articulated by the Popes and leading theologians. The article stated that a Republican Ireland would ensure equal education for all, a fundamental right that no just person could oppose. It dismissed objections about cost by pointing out that the State already funded education for some, so it could surely do so for all. Similarly, it envisioned an Ireland where food was available to everyone, and the land, then controlled by a minority, would be worked for the benefit of the people as a whole. Anticipating criticism that this interfered with private property, the article cited papal encyclicals and clerical scholars to show that the Church itself recognised the moral limits of property rights when the common good was at stake. Drawing on Pope Pius XI's '*Quadragesimo Anno*' and the writings of Father Cahill, S.J., Dr. Coffey of Maynooth, and Father Bede Barrett, O.P., the article argued that private ownership was a stewardship, not an absolute right. It asserted that if property had been abused to enrich a few at the expense of many, the State had both the right and duty to intervene and redistribute wealth to restore justice. In '*Quadragesimo Anno*,' issued by His Holiness Pope Pius XI,

commenting on the power of the State to interfere in the matter of ownership, the following paragraph had occurred:

> *"It follows from the two-fold character of the needs which we have termed individual and social, that men must take into account both kinds of needs in using their own property, not only their own advantage, but also the common good. To define more clearly the limits when the need occurs and when the natural law does not do so is the function of the government. Provided that the natural and divine law be observed, the public authority, in view of the common good, may specify more accurately what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions. Moreover, Leo XIII had wisely taught that 'The defining of private possession has been left by God to men's own industry and to the laws of individual peoples.'"*

Again, Father Cahill, S.J., who had made a lifelong study of the question of social science, wrote in his then recent work '*The Framework of a Christian State*':

> *"The Catholic teaching on the rights of ownership does not imply that one has a natural right to acquire property to an unlimited extent, or that one has unlimited rights as to its use over the property one owns. A man has indeed a natural right to what he may lawfully acquire by his personal labour. Furthermore, no authority may prevent him from obtaining by just means what is required for his present and future needs, including the needs of a family."*

In addition to such was a quotation from Dr. Coffey of Maynooth, who, commenting on James Connolly's statements, wrote in '*The Catholic Bulletin*' (1920):

> *"To hold that the State has the power and should exercise the power of confiscating the surplus productive wealth of the capitalist class is not to*

> *advocate plunder. If, therefore, the institution of private ownership has been fearfully abused, it is the clear right and duty of the State to remedy the abuse. But how else can it be remedied except by the State gradually taking from the capitalist minority the excessive or surplus productive wealth to which nature gives its actual holders no natural right as against the common good, and gradually transferring its control and use to those whom the capitalist system has excluded from it?"*

And yet another ecclesiastical authority, Father Bede Barrett, O.P., wrote:

> *"It is sheer cant for me to speak of the sacredness of private property when it consists for the moment of depriving many of private property altogether. The present arrangements of property were adopted because they were found to work; they may therefore be again discarded if they be found to have outlived their serviceableness."*

Concluding, the piece declared that Cumann na mBan's vision of Ireland prioritised the right to live above the right to own property. In contemporary Ireland, it said, private wealth and vested interests were held as more sacred than human life - a condition that a truly Christian and Republican Ireland must correct.[154]

In November 1933, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that a crowd of roughly 10,000 people had gathered in College Green, Dublin, to attend the annual meeting organised by the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence. Mr Donal O'Donoghue, who presided over the meeting, remarked that it was remarkable and disheartening that, at such a late stage in Ireland's struggle, it was still necessary to hold an anti-imperialist rally. He condemned the British supporters who were holding their own pro-imperialist demonstration, which the Fianna Fáil Government had

[154] *An Phoblacht 14/10/1933*

permitted - allowing them to parade through Dublin with British flags and symbols. O'Donoghue said it was shameful that the same government had granted permission to Imperialists to march while Republican prisoners remained locked up under harsh conditions. Members of the Republican Army, confined in military barracks run by the same forces responsible for atrocities in 1922, were being treated as criminals rather than as political prisoners. In Mountjoy Prison, they were kept in solitary confinement for 21 hours a day, forbidden to speak, and only allowed brief exercise and smoking privileges. He condemned the Fianna Fáil Government for maintaining these repressive conditions while claiming to represent republican ideals. Other speakers, such as Peter Kearney, Maud Gonne MacBride and Frank Ryan had declared that Imperialism's grip on Ireland remained strong and that Fianna Fáil would never lead the nation out of the British Empire. The anti-imperialist meeting, they said, was being held not to mourn fallen soldiers, but to protest against the hypocrisy of Armistice Day celebrations, which glorified British military power rather than peace. They drew historical parallels, recalling how politicians such as John Redmond had betrayed Ireland under the banner of "majority rule," enlisting Irishmen as cannon fodder in Britain's wars. They compared them to the Free State Government, which had executed patriots such as Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett, and Joe MacKelvey in 1922 - and argued that many of the same individuals or their supporters still held positions of authority in the current government. They insisted that the Fianna Fáil administration was merely a softer version of the Cosgrave regime that preceded it, continuing the same policies of repression and coercion under a different name. Even though Fianna Fáil had promised reform, its actions - including police raids and imprisonments - mirrored those of its predecessors. In closing, they declared that true republican freedom could never be achieved while such governments remained in power, and he urged the people of Ireland to continue resisting Imperialism and betrayal in all its forms.[155]

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[155] *An Phoblacht 18/11/1933*

In a feature critical of the IRA, the '*United Ireland*' paper asserted in November 1933 that one did not need to travel to Russia, nor even to join an official Communist Party, to be considered a Communist. The paper claimed that just as anyone baptised into the Creed was a Christian, so too anyone who believed in the "class-war method" of creating a classless society could be regarded as a Communist, whether they lived in Moscow or Belmullet. By this measure, the paper alleged, the leadership of the IRA was Communist. The paper further argued that the IRA's leadership had not confined itself to "national Communism," a movement rejecting international ties, but had steadily gravitated since 1927 toward the international Communist movement based in Russia. It had also asserted that the IRA had actively participated in organisations linked to the Communist International, particularly the League Against Imperialism, which the paper described as a direct Communist front. According to '*United Ireland*,' the League Against Imperialism, sometimes called the Anti-Imperialist League, had provided cover for IRA meetings since 1928. While many in Ireland may have thought that such gatherings were merely anti-British demonstrations, the paper asserted that they were also occasions for "high-pitched propaganda" designed to stir class war between Irishmen. The paper alleged that the League was directed and subsidised by Moscow, formerly headquartered in Berlin, before being moved to Prague. It described the League as operating across Europe, America, India, and China, where it was accused of fomenting anti-Christian violence, including the 1927 massacre at Nanking. For this reason, the paper claimed, Irish audiences listening to IRA speakers under the League's banner should recognise that they were hearing voices aligned with an organisation which, abroad, promoted atheism and attacks on Christian missions.

The paper maintained that the League Against Imperialism had formal ties to other Communist bodies, including the Profintern (Red International of Labour Unions). It cited international trade union federations that had denounced the League as nothing more than a Bolshevik front. According to '*United Ireland*,' the League was deliberately designed by

the Third International to "harness nationalism" in colonised or oppressed countries, thus turning national pride into Communist revolutions. Ireland, it argued, was of particular strategic importance to Moscow, not out of sympathy for Irish independence but because of the island's position in weakening Britain's global power. The paper went on to compare Ireland's situation with that of India. It alleged that Moscow had made India a focus of its anti-imperialist strategy, especially after the 1929 Amsterdam meeting of the League Against Imperialism. Gandhi's pacifism was condemned by the League as "counter-revolutionary," and '*United Ireland*' suggested that the Irish section of the League echoed these attacks. The paper highlighted what it described as the close co-operation between Irish and Indian Communists, pointing out that both Irish representatives and the Indian nationalist Jawaharlal Nehru attended the League's Brussels Congress in 1927. In conclusion, '*United Ireland*' argued that the IRA leadership was consciously engaged in a systematic effort to turn Ireland's campaign into a Communist revolution. This, it warned, was happening even though the "national-political revolution" had, in their opinion, already ended, and what the country most needed was peace and economic reconstruction. For the paper, this was the gravest danger: that prolonging a struggle artificially only served the growth of Communism in Ireland.[156]

In January 1934, an article in '*An Phoblacht*' argued that, while presenting itself as an exponent of republicanism, the '*Irish Press*' viciously attacked the Irish Republican Army and called for its disbandment or suppression. It maintained that the newspaper stood rigidly for the preservation of the situation created by the imposition of the Treaty and consistently denounced the republican movement, which sought the renunciation of that British instrument and the overthrow of the parliaments and institutions based upon it.

In its attack on the I.R.A., the article asserted, the *'Irish Press*' appealed to what it described as the necessity for the Army's acceptance of "majority rule." According to '*An*

[156] *United Ireland 25/11/1933*

Phoblacht,' this line of argument pursued two objectives: first, to arouse public opinion against the I.R.A., and second, to provide moral backing for the Free State government. The paper contended that every argument then being advanced by the '*Irish Press*' in defence of "majority rule" had been used since 1922 by anti-republicans and imperialists against those who had remained faithful to the Republic. It further argued that it was significant that, once the '*Irish Press*' campaign against republicans began, the openly imperialist press moderated its attacks. '*An Phoblacht*' suggested that imperialist interests recognised that attacks on the fundamental principles of republicanism were more effective when delivered by the '*Irish Press*' than by overtly imperialist papers such as the '*Irish Independent*' or the '*Irish Times*.' Attacks from these latter organs, it maintained, had long since lost their effectiveness and had often served instead to strengthen the republican cause. Imperialists, the article claimed, were indifferent to the means employed so long as their objectives were advanced. The article asserted that, in insisting upon acceptance of "majority rule" - that is, the acceptance of elections conducted under the existing system - the Irish Press fully understood that republicans rejected the notion that the freedom and unity of the Irish nation were subject to the changing preferences of political parties. It maintained that there was no fundamental difference between the two existing regimes except the extent of British territory over which they claimed authority.

From the republican perspective, '*An Phoblacht*' argued, the "majority rule" argument possessed no greater validity in the present than it had in 1922 or at any point thereafter. To accept it as a principle for resolving the question of Irish sovereignty would, the article contended, amount to the abandonment of a sacred right and a surrender to Britain of its claimed authority to dictate how the Irish nation should be governed. The article also addressed the argument that circumstances differed from those of 1916 because parliaments elected by adult suffrage now existed. In response, '*An Phoblacht*' maintained that there were indeed two such parliaments, but argued that neither represented the parliament of the Irish people or the Irish nation, nor could

either claim sovereign authority. Both, it asserted, had been established by Britain, and only with their overthrow could a truly national parliament emerge, one entitled to the allegiance and obedience of the Irish people.

'*An Phoblacht*' criticised the '*Irish Press*' for developing into a leading champion of "law and order" and of the state apparatus. It argued that the newspaper consistently avoided any examination of the origins of the laws it defended or the purposes for which they were enacted. According to the article, the '*Irish Press*' failed to expose the fact that the bulk of existing legislation had been designed to dispossess the mass of the people of their wealth and property, to legitimise confiscation by alien interests, and to legalise the extortions and profiteering of modern industrial and commercial exploiters. The article further contended that the newspaper obscured the reality that the machinery of the state - courts, police, judiciary, and parliaments - had been created primarily to enforce this system of robbery and exploitation and to prevent the people from reclaiming rights taken from them by force or by legal corruption.

Referring to earlier commentary, '*An Phoblacht*' reiterated its argument that the '*Irish Press*' supported "law and order" because it functioned as an organ of vested interests arising from a system imposed under alien rule. These interests, it maintained, could prosper only so long as control over political power remained in their hands. The economic policies advocated by the '*Irish Press*,' the article argued, served to increase the wealth of this exploiting section of society, which in turn demanded ever-greater protection of its interests against the mass of the people. The article pointed to the growing activity of industrial, manufacturing, and commercial associations, which were said to be uniting more closely in order to exert pressure on the Free State government to strengthen and deploy the machinery of the state in their favour.

In its treatment of the I.R.A., '*An Phoblacht*' argued, the '*Irish Press*' demanded either the disbandment of the Army or the presentation of I.R.A. candidates at elections, with

acceptance of the electoral outcome. This, the article asserted, amounted to a demand that the I.R.A. abandon its role as an army and revolutionary organisation and instead transform itself into a constitutional political party. These demands, '*An Phoblacht*' noted, were identical to those previously advanced by the Cosgrave government and, it argued, possessed no greater validity than they had at that earlier period. The article reiterated that republicans rejected absolutely the claim that national sovereignty must be subordinated to electoral processes conducted under existing conditions. Finally, the article highlighted what it regarded as the hypocrisy of the '*Irish Press*' in calling upon the I.R.A. to place its policies before the people while simultaneously providing minimal - or no - coverage of republican statements and speeches. Given the limited number of republican public meetings, '*An Phoblacht*' argued, this could not be justified on grounds of space. Readers, it suggested, could readily compare the scant attention afforded to republicans with the extensive coverage given to imperialist voices and would conclude that a virtual boycott of republican opinion existed. This, the article concluded, exposed the perceived insincerity of the '*Irish Press's*' professed desire that the I.R.A. "put its policy before the people."[157]

[157] *An Phoblacht 27/1/1934*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

AN PHOBLACHT, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4th, 1930.

IRELAND GREETS INDIA

Monster Anti-Imperialist Meetings Pledge Sympathy and Support

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE'S ROUSING SPEECH

Subash Chandra Bose, leader of Indian Revolutionary Army, has just served a sentence of nine years' imprisonment. He is President of the Trade Union Congress, and Mayor of Calcutta.

Thousands of Dublin citizens flocked to the Mansion House on the evening of Wednesday, the 24th of September, to voice their solidarity with the Indian people in their struggle against British Imperialism. The Round Room was packed until not even standing room was available, while an enthusiastic overflow meeting took place in the street outside. Not since before the "Treaty" was signed has that historic venue seen so large or fervent a gathering as that which on Wednesday night under the auspices of the Irish Section of the World League Against Imperialism voiced Ireland's welcome to the Indian representative, Mr. Krishna Desnazire, who was the principal speaker of the evening. For other speakers see panel in col. 3.

Krishna Desnazire, having been introduced by Seán MacBride (Secretary of the Irish Section of the World League Against Imperialism), addressed the meeting.

I must first (he said) convey to revolutionary Ireland the greetings of revolutionary India. The victory of our armed insurgents at Chittegong over British military proves that your messages of advice are already bearing fruit. Englan' and India are at war. The Indian people do not wish to remain within the British Empire, but England holds them against their will by war and by threats of war. England denies the voluntary of the Indian Republican Army their rights as belligerents—the right to be treated as soldiers of war.

A BULLY BROUGHT DOWN.

Recently, for example, two British police inspectors were shot by India's soldiers. Their shooting has been lamented to the world in the imperialist press as a "dastardly assassination." But the Inspector-General of Police in Frogal who was shot was the police chief under whose administration the Lord Mayor of Calcutta, Sen Gupta, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Republican Army, Subhas C. Bose were brutally beaten while handcuffed and held prisoners in a British jail in Bengal. Subhas Bose was beaten into unconsciousness, and the Lord Mayor was so ill-treated that he became ill and lost several stone in weight.

REASSURING NEWS.

Some days ago the reassuring news came that negotiations for peace had broken down, it filled my heart with joy because it conveyed to me the fact that we have at last realised "Indian Solidarity." The soul of India has been reckoned. History proves that once a nation's soul is aroused and it realises nationhood, no power on earth, however reactionary, could prevent it gaining its freedom. Such a nation realises that no price is too high to pay, no suffering too much to endure, and no sacrifice too great to offer in order to achieve its ideals. It is because of this fact that we are in India that prison walls have lost their terror and death has lost its sting, and to-day millions of men, women and children are inviting imprisonment, suffering and death in order to realise independence through Gandhi's creed of non-violence. Our people are nonviolent despite the worst form of provocation and assault. Five-sixths Imperialists in England and in the North of Ireland are urging the Government to adopt more repressive measures, but let it be understood that even a worse term when driven to the wall, as was the policy of the youth of India is exhausted, as it will be in the not distant future, we shall have to resort to more rational and more effective weapons with which to liberate ourselves. We shall need back trends for bands, strike blow for blow, take reprisals for every outrage and make things so hot that on England's heart will be able to remain in India.

GANDHI A REPUBLICAN.

God has been kind to us. He has given us one of the greatest leaders of modern times, Mahatma Gandhi, who was at one time a lawyer, and advocate in the cause of Indian immigrants, organiser of Red Cross auxiliary, a believer in the good intentions of British rule, Congress Worker, Non Co-Operator, Home Ruler and now a Republican. He has done more than *Any* other for the awakening of national consciousness and the revival of our cottage industry. As he has evolved from lawyer to Republican, so he will yet become a revolutionary internationalist. To-night there sits on this platform one of my Indian sisters; her presence here is symbolic of the emancipation of Indian womanhood from the Purdah and the Zenanah. Though only recently emancipated, they have taken their place in the profession, in the Legislative Councils, on the respectful levels, and recently they have volunteered to serve in the Indian Republican Army, and are suffering and going to prison with the rest of India.

CALL TO IRELAND.

As history records no instance in which one nation has continuously ruled over another and since throughout human experience we have seen time and again oppression creating a force which less courageous oppression, we look to the future with calm and confidence in the ultimate success of the cause for which we are fighting. Right here I should like to point out a similarity in our objectives. The goal of Sinn Féin is an Irish Republic; so, too, the goal of our Congress is an Indian Republic. Just as you want to see Ireland not only free but also Gaelic, in the same way we too want not only the political and economic freedom of India, but a freedom which would enable us to revive our ancient culture and civilisation and make "Hindustan," which to-day is just as living a language as it ever was, the *lingua franca* of our country. The only obstacle, the only enemy, the only menace which we have in our path is British Imperialism. Men and women of Ireland, citizens, you who have pledged yourselves to the Republic, do you not think that the time has come, for India and Ireland to get together and break the tentacles of this octopus which is a stumbling-block to our liberation and progress? Is not the international situation far settled and consolidated *against* us to-day, more favourable than it has ever been since the last imperialist war? Are you going to remain silent observers while in India we are struggling for human freedom? Or are you going to strike and strike quickly, thus making doubly sure that we are going to conquer and subdue the greatest menace to human liberty and world peace? When Wolfe Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, Pearse and Connolly struck to redeem and liberate Ireland they had not the resources and the advantages which you now have. They were men who had realised nationhood, who felt it was better to die in the pursuit of freedom than lead the wretched lives of slaves. How dare you rest content, while the blood for which these men died is unredeemed? You hold ceremonies, meetings and short tears to do them honour. That is not enough. If you want to do them honour, if you want to pay them homage, then it is imperative that you realise the ideals for which they

PEADAR O'DONNELL, Irish Working Farmers;

SEAN MURRAY, Workers' Revolutionary Party;

Mrs. SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON, Irish Section Women's International League for Peace and Freedom;

ALEC LYNN, B.L.;

HELENA MOLONY, Irish Women Workers' Union;

JIM LARKIN, Junior, Workers' Revolutionary Party, and

PROINSIAS O RIAIN, Editor, "An Phoblacht."

Mrs. Kamala Chattopadhyaya, who has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for the active part she has taken in the demonstrations organised in Bombay, especially by the Indian Youth League of which she is an executive member.

Nehru the Younger, President of the Indian National Congress and extremist leader. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence.

Mrs. Subaishini Nambiar, a member of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, was President of the first congress of the Revolutionary Youth League which has just been declared illegal by the Government.

"That this mass meeting of Dublin Citizens declares the solidarity of Republican Ireland with the Indian masses in their struggle against Irish Imperialism and its Indian allies. We would urge on our Indian Comrades the lesson of the betrayed Irish Revolution and would appeal to them to guard against the dangers that halted our struggle.

"We greet the Indian Masses in revolt and hail the Indian Republican Army. We salute the memory of those valiant men and women who have gone down before the savagery of British troops in India, and we greet the heroic revolutionary fighters now languishing in Meerut and other jails in India.

"We call on the labouring masses of the Irish race throughout the world to recognise that Imperial Britain and Revolutionary India are at war, and that the loyalty of Revolutionary Ireland is to the enemy of Imperial Britain.

Gandhi, organiser and leader of the pacific Non-Co-operation Movement. Gandhi has been interned and India has passed from passive resistance to militant methods.

Imperial Crown," vows to be wrenched away, we too might hope that the "cowardly gem of the western world" would drop out soon after. When Emmet's epitaph was written and Ireland took her place among the small nations of the earth we hope that England too would then take her place also among the small nations.

PEADAR O'DONNELL.

In proposing the resolution (we quote at fact of solemn R), Peadar O'Donnell said that its terms were simple and clear, the purpose of the meeting was natural to Dublin masses. We were gathered to declare our solidarity with revolutionary India in its struggle against British Imperialism. The British had gone out to India to loot it. British rule in India was simply the machinery that the British ruling class had built up in order that they might run the Indian masses as a British industry. Certain elements in India were associated with the British in running the industry and these elements were the basis for the native backing of British Imperialism. But the masses were tired of being run as an industry and were in revolt. They were refusing to co-operate with the Imperial machine and they were now already in conflict with it. A war was raging, and the chief concern of the British ruling class was to keep that fact hid : they are trying to tell us that the Indian masses love the British ruling class that robs them and are loyal to the jailers and hangmen and police and soldiers and policemen's there for the robbery, but that there are a few extremists and that all will be well when they are killed.

While the war is on we have our tasks. For one thing we must tell our own masses about the Indian struggle ; it will help to raise them against the robbery under which they suffer. We must get busy among the toiling masses of our race in Britain and make them a sounding-board for what is going on in India. The British Labour Government is the most useful agent the British ruling classes could have in office just now, for it names there is no opposition telling the workers in Britain what is being done in their name. We must make the workers of our race get busy, and as many of them are members of the British Labour party we must see that they carry a challenge into the camp of the treacherous Ramsay & Co.

The lesson of the Irish struggle should be studied by the Indian masses. The stage will be reached where the " blessings of Dominion Home Rule " will be urged by Indian capitalists. Our experiences must be made available. These experiences will not save the masses from Jailbosses, but they should save them from Ballbosses.

Irish workers in Australia, *New Zealand*, Russia, must be in the forefront of the work of publicity in the struggle for India's cause. The whole influence and backing of Nationalist revolutionary movements at home and abroad will be vigorously on the side of Revolutionary India.

SEAN MURRAY.

Seán Murray regarded the middle-class leadership of such men as Gandhi a danger to the Indian revolution—citing the betrayal of the Irish revolution by Collins and Griffith as a warning. The fight of India's toiling millions was the fight of the Irish workers and peasants—the enemy of India's freedom was represented in Ireland by the Free State and Belfast Governments, British capitalism was getting a share of the dividend

(Continued on page 6.)

ANTI-IMPERIALISTS OF THE WORLD : FIGHT!

As seen in this feature alone, the Anti-Imperialist campaign, promoted by the IRA's news organ, was lead by figures heavily involved in revolutionary socialist/ communist activity in both Ireland and India. (Source: An Phoblacht 4/10/1930)

LEAGUE AGAINST

IMPERIALISM

and for

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

A MASS MEETING

of Dublin Citizens will be held under the above auspices, in

COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN

on

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10th

(Chair at 8 p.m.)

To protest against the flagrant display of British Imperialism disguised as

ARMISTICE CELEBRATIONS

BANDS WILL ATTEND

List of Speakers and all further details will be published Next Week.

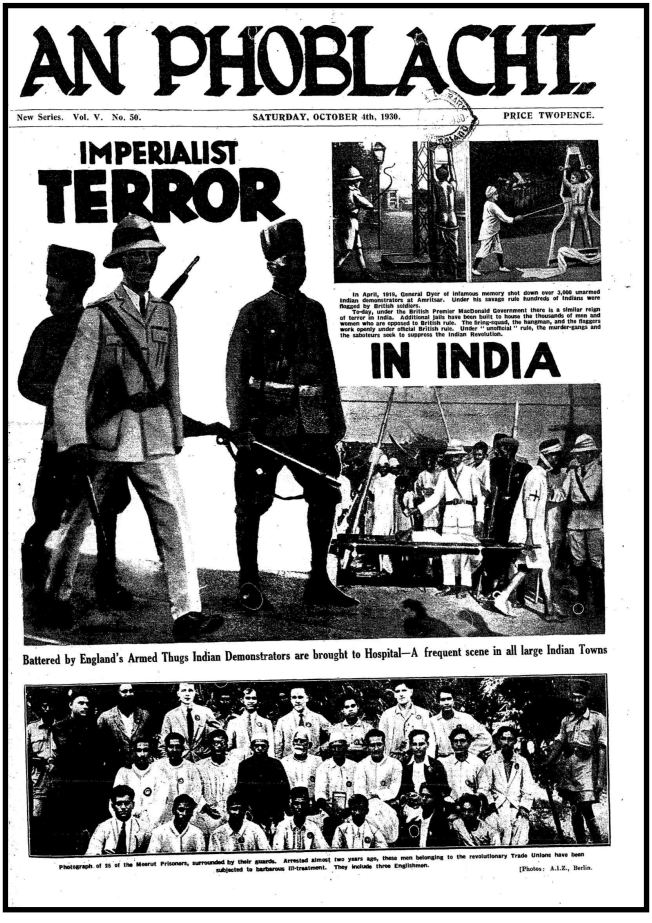
DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!

(Source: An Phoblacht 1/11/1930)

PEADAR O'DONNELL.

A 1930s portrait of IRA Army Executive member, and editor of 'An Phoblacht,' Peadar O'Donnell.
(Photo source: An Phoblacht 1/8/1931)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



AN PHOBLACHT.

New Series. Vol. V. No. 50. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4th, 1930. PRICE TWOPENCE.

IMPERIALIST TERROR IN INDIA

In April, 1919, General Dyer of infamous memory shot down over 3,000 unarmed Indian demonstrators at Amritsar. Under his savage rule hundreds of Indians were flogged by British soldiers.

To-day, under the British Premier MacDonald Government there is a similar reign of terror in India. Armoured cars have been built to hound the thousands of men and women who are opposed to British rule. The firing-squad, the hangman, and the flogger work openly under official British rule. Under "unofficial" rule, the murder-gangs and the saboteurs seek to suppress the Indian Revolution.

Battered by England's Armed Thugs Indian Demonstrators are brought to Hospital—A frequent scene in all large Indian Towns

Photograph of 33 of the Meerut Prisoners, surrounded by their guards. Arrested almost two years ago, these men belonging to the revolutionary Trade Unions have been subjected to barbarous ill-treatment. They include three Englishmen.

[Photos: A.I.Z., Berlin.

'An Phoblacht' documented the campaign against imperialism in India.
(Source: An Phoblacht 4/10/1930)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

The United Irishman

Ireland is more to us than Republic, Kingdom or Commonwealth.

VOL. 2. NO. 5. (Registered as a Newspaper.) DUBLIN, SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1933. PRICE TWOPENCE

LEGION OF THE RERE
2 SEP 1933

The Ferns Meeting.

THE enthusiasm at Mr. Cosgrave's meeting at Ferns and the evidence it afforded of the strong support of rich and poor, of farmer, labourer and businessman in the best tillage county in Ireland was proof that only a strong and united effort is needed to oust Fianna Fáil from power and to save the country from the financial and economic abyss towards which it is being rushed. It is not a question of merely preparing for a general election and waiting till the Government thinks it opportune again to dissolve the Dáil. Organisation and demonstrations, and the proper mobilisation of public opinion will affect Deputies sufficiently to shake Fianna Fáil off its perch and give the people a second chance of rectifying the blunder of February, 1932. We hope that Mr. Cosgrave will arrange to visit a number of other centres through the country in the next few weeks, and stimulate the work of intensive local organisation, which in view of Fianna Fáil's semi-official adoption of the policy of wholesale persecution is now more necessary than ever before. Mere popular indignation will not defeat the hundreds of thousands of ghost votes which Government leaders are preparing to cast next election.

The Collins-Griffith Anniversary.

THE Collins. Griffith-O'Higgins Commemoration celebration will take place in Dublin on Sunday, August 13th. The arrangements are in the hands of the A.C.A. but the members of city branches of Cumann na nGaedheal will also take part in the procession. We understand that the plan is to march past the Cenotaph where a wreath will be laid, and then to proceed to Glasnevin where wreaths will be laid on the graves of each of the three co-founders of the Saorstát. The A.C.A. headquarters has arranged for the running of special trains from the principal provincial centres for the purpose of conveying to the capital representative contingents of Comrades from all divisions. It is expected that A.C.A. members will march in uniform so that this year's celebration will recover much of the impressiveness formerly imparted by the military parade. At the same time the inclusion of civilians in the procession will give the proceedings a quality of spontaneity and popularity that was not possible in the strictly official displays of former years.

The Company You Keep

LAST Monday's papers report the I.R.A. gathering at Bodenstown. A list of the more notorious leaders who were present is given. We confess that we did not bother reading more than the first ten names. Of course, the usual Seán Russell, George Gilmore, Peadar O'Donnell, etc., were to the fore. They had gone to listen approvingly to the harangue of one Maurice Twomey. Mr. Twomey fulminated against all who suggested that the I.R.A. was in anyway contaminated with Communism or was other than an organisation of pious young men. This was all calculated to have the desired effect upon the raw lads from various parts of the country. They can now be expected to go home firmly determined to defy Bishops and all church authority with easy consciences. It must have required great inhibition on the part of Mr. Peadar O'Donnell and Mr. Russell to restrain their laughter.

Mr. X. of Moscow.

WHILE the poor raw youths were swallowing open-mouthed the assurances of the devoted piety of the leaders, Mr. O'Donnell must have been very tickled at the thought of the shock it would be to the poor dupes if they read "The Knife." And while the I.R.A.'s purity of any stain of Communism was being stressed, Mr. Seán Russell's mind must have gone back to his time in Moscow. He must have thought of those talks he had with "Mr. X" in Berlin on his way back from Russia, and afterwards in London. It could have been awkward if someone in the crowd had asked questions about Mr. Russell's letter—that was read out in the Dáil October 14th, 1931—on the subject when he wrote:—

> "It is quite possible the Mr. X is using O/C Britain as one of his agents (just an individual) and although he is quite willing to pay us for our services, it may not come under the notice of the people in Moscow that we as an organisation are rendering any assistance."

Gripping the Innocent

IT has been said that hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue. The hypocrisy of the leaders of the I.R.A. is gratifying in that it shows that they have found it impossible to get the young men of Ireland to join an organisation which they know to be Communistic or irreligious. But at the same time the people of this country must be alert. The I.R.A. leaders are determined to ensnare the youth of Ireland. If this cannot be done without hypocrisy and lies, if it is necessary to conceal the real nature of the I.R.A. it will be concealed. Once the poor youths are ensnared into the organisation they can be doped with doctrines just as quickly or as slowly as they are able to absorb them.

To Explain it Away

THOSE leaders of the I.R.A. who are not prepared to play the hypocrite and soft-pedal the "social doctrines" are in cease to be prominent in the public eye. It is even felt that a mistake was made in the manifesto proclaiming the doctrine that "all means of production and distribution are to be public property." That will require to be watered down and explained away somewhat. Mr. Robert Barton comes to the rescue. He writes in "An Phoblacht" of June 17th. He asks to have this doctrine explained in greater detail—and then suggests ways in which it could be camouflaged to be made more palatable to the Catholic population of this country. It might seem strange to some people that there should be need for explanation in "greater detail." The proposal was quite clear. It has been a cardinal doctrine of extreme socialism for many years.

RATHMINES COMPANY A.C.A. PARADE TO CHURCH OF THE THREE PATRONS, RATHGAR

I.R.A. Want a Slave State

THOSE simple-minded people must learn that this is the way the I.R.A. have of running away when they find that they have overstepped the mark and given the public knowledge of their objective that is likely to alienate the public rather than win support. Mr. Barton's useful doubts are to be set at rest. The "Draft Constitution of the Republic of Ireland" is to be published "with an elaboration of clauses which are likely to provoke most criticism." In other words, anything that may shock Irish consciences is to be explained away beforehand. Only the cursed and intelligent reader will be permitted to see that the "Republic of Ireland" is to be a slave State.

Count Plunkett Again

COUNT PLUNKETT writes again to the "Irish Press." He does not specifically repeat his statement about His Holiness Pope Benedict XV. But, presumably, the readers are expected to feel that he still stands over his statement. He does this by abusing the "Irish Independent," presumably because it informed its readers of the Vatican denial of his story. Somehow he seems to regard this as equivalent to a demand for the lives of Easter Week men. But really he should have attacked the "Irish Press" at the same time. For the Vatican contradiction was too important a matter to be suppressed even by the "Irish Press." That organ, controlled by President de Valera, not only published Count Plunkett's ridiculous story, but wrote a leader that assumed responsibility for its truth. The leader went even further than Count Plunkett went. For whereas he only went so far as to say that the Pope was informed that the date of the Rising was fixed—the leader writer informed his readers that His Holiness was actually told the date. The Vatican has denied the story. But it would be too much to expect from the President's organ that it should attempt to undo the wrong it had perpetrated against the Holy See.

It merely opens its columns to all and sundry who attempt to give verisimilitude to the untruth that it published—and denounces this paper for calling attention to this obvious untruth even before the official Vatican statement was made.

Sauce for the Gander

SHREWD observers of the political scene are wondering what significance is to be attached to the form of the reception given to President de Valera on his return from Rome. No one will cavil at the salute of guns given to the chief representative of the State. If there is any comment to be made it is that the President did not consistently place that side when he was away and that he so far forgot the dignity of his office that he made a Party speech in Paris. We do not regret that he was given a State reception. In principle that is as it should be. The trouble is, we fear, that the President's frequently indulged love of pomp springs not from a desire to honour the institutions of the people, but from his hunger for personal adulation. It is not, however, the State reception which has excited speculation. It is the fact that the homecoming celebration stopped there. How is it that his shrewd Party managers

The front page of the pro-Blueshirt 'United Irishman' newspaper slams the IRA's alleged Communist links in June 1933.
(Photo source: The United Irishman 24/6/1933)

As noted by Prof. Hanley in 'The IRA, 1926-1936,' Sean MacSwiney (brother of Terence) was secretary of the Irish section of Comintern's League Against Imperialism.
(Photo source: National Library of Ireland)

Against Imperialist War

The Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union has addressed the following appeal to all workers:—

AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR!
FOR THE SOVIET UNION!
FOR REVOLUTIONARY CHINA!

We, representatives of workers, peasants, co-operatives, representatives of peoples suppressed by imperialism; we, workers in the field of science, art, education and culture; we, social democrats, non-party Communists and members of national revolutionary parties—all we assembled here in Moscow, at the Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union on the occasion of the ten-years' festival of the great October Revolution, consider it to be our duty to declare openly before all the world—

We regard war against the Soviet Union as a shameful counter-revolution, as the greatest crime against toiling humanity.

War against the Soviet Union is a war against the working class and the peasantry for the benefit of the landowners and capitalists. War against the Soviet Union is a crusade against Socialism for the benefit of capitalism.

A front page report on a Congress held in Moscow, USSR.
(Source: An Phoblacht 31/12/1927)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

AN PHOBLACHT, SATURDAY, 27th JUNE, 1931.

IRELAND Defies Armed Imperialism

Despite the joint action of the Northern and Free State Military Forces to prevent the honouring of Wolfe Tone, more Irishmen and Women were assembled in his name last Sunday than at any date since the signing of the "Treaty." The challenge of unlimited military force was met—and defeated—by the resolution of a determined people. When Daniel O'Connell shirked the challenge of Clontarf, Ireland's hopes were shattered for a generation. When Ireland defied the Armoured Cars and Machine Guns of Imperialism at Bodenstown last Sunday the prestige of England's new garrison was shaken to the core. On, then, to fresh Victories, people of Ireland!

A NATION'S ANSWER.

Despite the attempt to overcome the opposition by a huge display of armed force, and despite the brief time for obtaining donations transport to the sacredest shrine Ireland gave British imperialism an undivided answer last Sunday. Close on 10,000 people were present at Bodenstown — from Belfast, Dublin, Mayo, Limerick, Tipperary, Cavan, Clare, Sligo, Galway, Roscommon, Kilkenny, Waterford, Leix, Offaly, etc.

THE PROCESSION.

At 3.30 p.m. the huge procession moved off, headed by an advance guard from the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, I.R.A. Composed I.R.A. detachments from the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Dublin Battalions, from South Dublin, Mayo, Clare, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Leix-Offaly, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary, Roscommon, Sligo, Waterford, Wexford and Kerry; detachments of Fianna from Dublin, Cavan (Cumann na Fiann) and Sligo; of Cumann na mBan from Dublin, Cavan, Clare, Leitrim and Wexford; Clan na nGaedheal (Girl Scouts), Women's Prisoners' Defence League, 1916 Club, Fianna Fail from Dublin and the provinces, Irish Friends of Soviet Russia, Trinity College Republican Group, the Fianna Figers, the Republican Brass and Reed Band, the Banbridge Fife and Drum Band, the Gaedhil Fyers and the Bohin Boys Fife and Drum Band. A detachment from the 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, brought up the rear.

THE ORATION.

Peadar O'Donnell said that Irish Ireland, to whom the task of giving the address that day had been delegated, had been arrested during the night by the police. Russell was pre-eminently the man to deliver an oration at Tone's grave; nature and experiences had combined to afford him the most vital elements to the principles and methods of Tone. Russell had something to say of very great value, but its value was measured in advance by our enemies and they seized Russell. And the enemy had judged, too, that the response of the Race of the people to a call to the grave of Tone would be of such proportions that they dare not risk the mobilization. And so last night the Free State Executive had, by written order of the Minister for Defence, forced the military occupation to cancel the train arrangements that was to collect the hosts of the Gael to Bodenstown.

CONCERTED MILITARY ACTION.

Before we make a closer examination of the facts here let us recall that on the other corner of this land to-day, another was moved to the memory of Tone, is in the hands of the British forces. In Belfast Harbour's Fort is the scene of a British military demonstration and the Belfast Orangemen are there from it. The machinery of the State, North and South, is therefore to-day fulfilling a common task.

THE IMPERIALIST MACHINE.

What is this State machine?

To understand the machine it is necessary to see that the British ruling class resided in here, not just to place soldiers in Dublin, Cork, The Curragh, Belfast, etc., but to entrench themselves by the order of life they would establish here. That was their object in coming; to exploit. The soldiers were simply here to make it possible for them to exploit; to beat down our resistance; to maintain law and order, and law and order is just that we accept exploitation quietly. Their jails, their police, their bailiffs, their soldiers were simply a machine built around the interests of the exploiters to steel jacket us into obedience to the greed of the exploiters. That is the State: that assertion of force with the interests of the British in the country: that is the sacred thing they talk to us about from their platforms: bailiffs, jails, thugs, tools, police, soldiers, used to beat down the cause of the people and make them the slave of the exploiting interests of our imperial masters.

STEEL-JACKETING THE MASSES.

The role of the soldiers was to hold us down. Now is it not quite clear that if we were to agree to obey our imperial masters in every way, to accept the order of life they dictated in their own interests, that the soldiers could tip-toe out of the country some night and still the conquest would go on? And if the British could be assured that if they withdrew their soldiers a group of Irishmen could, provided the British left some of their guns after them, take on the task of steel-jacketing the native masses, that a section of this nation would, on certain terms, hold this country for the Empire, protect the garrison from the masses they had looted, pay a liberal tribute to the British Exchequer—surely in that case the British would be wise to withdraw their soldiers and have their work done here "with an economy of British lives."

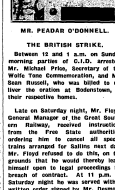
"So you see," the speaker declared, turning to the body of police directly in front of the platform, "you are one of our steel, hired to take on the tasks that the British interests demand and the British soldiers and R.I.C. served in pre-Treaty days. You have deserted your class and your race . . . you have become the servants of the British Empire."

This much-published withdrawal of the British troops was a sham performance. "Ireland's Week—Jubilee in Tralee." The *Independent* and papers like it screeched when the British soldiers marched out of Arbour and Seán MacEoin came in riding on a gun-carriage the British had loaned him.

MEET FORCE WITH FORCE!

Their State is a machine that we must destroy: All the powers of the State we must take into ours, and in the final phase we must be prepared to meet force with force. This day, however, was not the date fixed for the raising, no matter how much the Free State Executive may have been afraid it was: this day we came here to collect into our minds a truer sense of Tone's principles and a keener understanding of his methods.

The speaker then enumerated the work to be done: to recognise with Tone that the movement of freedom must be based on that large and respectable section of the community—the men of no property and their allies who are being crushed into misery in the land; based on them and with a leadership collected right in among those on whom the movement is based. Every struggle that rises, every strike in the cities, every fight on the land must be interpreted in this light so that the cause of the people of this country may be let into revolt against the machinery of the State on the whole front, not merely against the police on occasions like this, but against the whole order of life that the State enforces. Begin that mobilization, popularize Tone's teaching, rid when the cause of the people call through their revolutionary government for a hosting that is to break through the military machine that guards our enemies, then will we come forward with such surge that they will neither manage to stop our tenure nor block our purpose: *To* break the connection with England and vest all power in a free Republic in the Irish working-class and working farmers.



MR. PEADAR O'DONNELL.

THE BRITISH STRIKE.

Between 12 and 1 a.m. on Sunday morning parties of C.I.D. arrested Mr. Michael Price, Secretary of the Wolfe Tone Commemoration, and Mr. Seán Russell, who was billed to deliver the oration at Bodenstown, in their respective homes.

Late on Saturday night, Mr. Floyd, General Manager of the Great Southern Railway, received instructions from the Free State authorities, ordering him to cancel all special trains arranged for Sallins next day. Mr. Floyd refused to do this, on the grounds that he would thereby leave himself open to legal proceedings for breach of contract. At 11 p.m. on Saturday night he was served with a written order signed by Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, His Britannic Majesty's Minister for Defence in the Free State, intimating that any attempt to run trains would be met by military force, and that he, Mr. Floyd, would be held responsible.

On Sunday morning a large force of Free State troops in full war equipment seized Kingsbridge Station. Machine-guns commanded the main entrance. Huge forces of uniformed constabulary were concentrated at strategic points from Kingsbridge Station to O'Connell Street. Throughout the provinces railway stations were occupied by C.I.D., uniformed constabulary and, in some instances, by military in full war-kit.

Large forces of Free State troops in full war equipment with machine-guns and wireless seized the assembly field at Sallins and took up positions commanding the railway station. They were supported by detachments of uniformed constabulary and armed C.I.D. Similar forces—with armoured cars—commanded Bodenstown graveyard itself, and cavalry despatch riders were continually passing to and fro.

INCIDENTS OF THE DAY

There were dramatic moments at Bodenstown, but none quite so charged with lightning as that which marked the break through of the Dublin Brigade from the railway siding. The Brigade had fallen in and was waiting the signal to move off when a party of police under a couple of superintendents, who looked as gorgeous as brass sidgings, tabs and brass faces could make them, formed up across the exit. This did not disturb anybody for, after all, a wall of police is just a wall of tin and sweet and wedding buns. Everybody pi eats. And then suddenly on the bridge appears the head of a column of military, complete with tin hats, fixed bayonets. Coup submitted orders and the Dublin Brigade is moving; the police below and right into them barge the head of the Dublin Brigade: With a bellow like a poor cow struck by a motor car the superintendent went down and the ranks of the Gaels could scarce forbear to cheer. On sweep the Brigade.

FIANNA SURROUNDED!

At 9 a.m. on Sunday morning two police superintendents approached two members of the Fianna who were camped in a field at Sallins and ordered them to take down their tents. They refused. Ten minutes later three C.I.D. came along and repeated the order—demanding to know, moreover, why one of the Fianna was lighting a fire. He supplied the obvious answer—to cook breakfast. The C.I.D. withdrew, but were immediately followed by three more of the same breed who pulled down the tents, kicked out the fire and flung the camping utensils into a ditch. Some while Free State soldiers with fixed bayonets surrounded the field and held the Fianna prisoners until the Chief Scout arrived on the scene andpeeem plorily demanded their release.

ARREST OF MICHAEL KELLY.

As the procession was entering the graveyard Superintendent Murphy of Naas and a force of constabulary scanned a man from it. The Volunteers stood firm in their ranks, while two priests and Messrs. Seán MacBride and Peadar O'Donnell protested, but civilian onlookers shouting "Black-and-Tans!" closed in on the police. A second man was arrested—while a party of Free State soldiers in steel helmets lined up behind the graveyard wall. Threatening to call on the military, the superintendent and his men hastily retreated with their two prisoners—losing one en route. The other, Mr. Michael Kelly of Dublin, was removed to Naas Barracks, where he awaits trial on a charge under the Treason Act.

IN THE PROVINCES.

TRALEE.

About three hundred people, including fifty Fianna in uniform, attended a special Mass at 6.30, and afterwards vast crowds assembled at the railway station which had already been manned by an armed constabulary and C.I.D. Reprsen. natives from the different I.R.A. Companies, who had intended travelling, hastily secured motor-cars—there being no buses available. The impression produced on the armed men: "We're winning—they're panicking!"

SLIGO.

Sligo went into a rage over the cancelling of the trains, but one hundred representatives of the Republican organisations succeeded in obtaining alternative transport. When Fianna Eireann appeared outside the chapel and the railway stations selling An Phoblacht, all supplies were bought up in a few minutes. C.I.D. and uniformed constabulary seized the railway stations.

WATERFORD.

At Waterford wild rumours of shootings and arrests spread rapidly. The ban on the trains was met by a speedy mobilization of buses and motor-cars. Pilgrims to the Lourdes Grotto at Inchicore decided, on arrival in Dublin, to transfer to the pilgrimage to Bodenstown.

CORK.

C.I.D. and uniformed constabulary seized the railway stations, while military in full war-kit held the railway bridge at Kilbarry. Keen disappointment was felt, as at least six hundred pilgrims intended travelling from Cork City, and large contingents came in from country districts.

PORTLAOISHIRE.

Portlaoighise has no train in arranging alternative transport, and the Leix-Offaly Battalion was a stout body in the procession.

ENNISCORTHY.

"Never before had such a crowd intended going on the pilgrimage to Bodenstown," writes an Enniscorthy correspondent. "The amount inspired by the G.S.R. as guarantee had been well over-subscribed. At least six cars containing 40-50 volunteers from Enniscorthy-Gorey."

(Source: An Phoblacht 27/6/1931)

The symbol associated with Comintern. (Photo Source: https://www.thecollector.com/what-was-comintern-third-international/ [2023])

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE WORKERS' AND WORKING FARMERS' MOVEMENT

In February 1924, writing in '*Sinn Féin*,' J.J. Ennis, a resident of Wexford Town, remarked that in regard to their economic policy, he asserted that he should like to have a word. At the outset, he pointed out that each one of the seven points of agreement in policy presented, in itself, complications, difficulties, and a wide field for dispute and economic strife which would always hamper the rebuilding and progress - in the right sense - of the country. He questioned, for instance, what was meant by the lowering of the cost of living, or by healthy conditions of work and a fair wage. Such questions as profit-sharing and limits of excessive profits, he argued, were almost meaningless when it came to making them national policy. He asked whether the people of Ireland - "who else?" - if they fought to free their land, could be sure that, when victorious, it would indeed be their land. Or, he continued, would the people - the plain, real Irish, not the Pale people, who bore the burden of the work and made the greatest sacrifices in peace or war, in freedom or thraldom - find themselves disillusioned and discover that the land, called theirs during the struggle, was in fact not theirs at all, but belonged to the few? Would they, Ennis asked, be forced to return to toil, slavery, and poverty, so that, upon the results of their own labour, a privileged class might enrich, empower, and comfort itself? He asserted that Republicans must not stand for this.

It was, he noted, a common saying - especially in view of the "Free" State change - that it mattered little to the man in the street what political change took place, for he remained, on the whole, the same in status. This, he contended, was a condition of things from which Republicans, if they wished to compel the confidence of the people, must distance themselves. He declared that the economic slogan of the movement must be:

> *"The land for the people; production for use, not for profit; co-operation, not competition; the abolition*

of class distinction, which was rampant in the land - only one class, a working class, no matter in what sphere."

"Let us have no parasites," he insisted. He further asserted that the first essential step towards national economic peace and prosperity was the possession by the people of the most important factors in the country's economic life - the nationalisation of the land, the railways, and all other means of transport such as shipping; the municipalisation of gas and electric lighting services, tramways and bus services, and housing. He contended that such a course would minimise labour disputes and industrial unrest - the holding-up of the vitals of the nation's economic life. The fostering of co-operative societies, in production as well as in distribution, he maintained, was another important factor conducive to the happiness and prosperity of the people. All movements of this kind, which tended to create common rather than divided interests, should, he argued, be created, encouraged, and assisted by the State, thereby imbuing the nation with the grand and noble sentiment of all for each and each for all. He concluded that all the minor factors, such as production and home support, would, with common interest, the study of other nations' experience, and a very wise and honest administration, fall naturally into place as development proceeded. But, he urged, let the nation aim first at ending the tug-of-war internally - and then, that done, set about ending it internationally as well.[158]

Detailed in a June 1924 feature titled 'Our Economic Position,' the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper commenced by remarking that:

> *"The soil of Ireland is the basis of our economic strength or weakness; therefore, to arrive at a true appreciation of the existing economic situation in Ireland, which is weak, it is necessary to make a brief survey of the historical events which led up to*

[158] *Sinn Féin 9/2/1924*

our present system of land tenure and general agricultural position."

According to the paper, in early Irish society the land was regarded as belonging to the people who lived upon it, and every free person had a right to a share of it. Each individual, the paper stated, contributed to the common welfare by paying a levy to the local chieftain based on his means. In this system, government was at once aristocratic in leadership and democratic in its economic foundation. The paper asserted that this balance of political and economic life had long been defended and preserved by the Irish people against centuries of external pressure, sustained by their belief in the unity of communal ownership and self-government. The '*Sinn Féin*' publication claimed that the English invaders had recognised the strength of this union and deliberately sought to destroy it. At first, they had left trade and commerce largely untouched, focusing instead on dismantling Ireland's system of land tenure, which they viewed as central to the country's political independence. According to the paper, this policy aimed to dispossess the native Irish people of the land they held in common and transfer it to foreign landlords through laws that deliberately undermined Irish customs and traditions. English legislation, it observed, went so far as to condemn the Brehon system of landholding as "no law, but a lewd custom" - a tactic designed, the paper suggested, to foster contempt for native institutions among the Irish themselves. Yet, the newspaper maintained, the Irish people's claim to their land was ancient and deeply rooted, supported by a sense of justice and by two thousand years of ordered possession. In the paper's view, England's policy was openly one of extermination and exile directed against the rural Irish population. Despite these efforts, the paper emphasised, the people had survived "dungeon, fire, and sword," and their descendants remained in Ireland - embodying, in the words of Patrick Pearse, "the great, splendid, faithful common people of Ireland, un-bought and unterrified."[159]

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[159] *Sinn Féin 14/6/1924*

The '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper reported in July 1924 on an appeal originally published in the '*Connacht Tribune*' concerning the plight of tenants in Baigha, Maam Valley. According to the report, these tenants had, four years earlier, joined national efforts to end landlordism by pressuring their landlord to sell the estate. When legal action was taken in the Chancery Court, the landlord was awarded substantial compensation. The tenants, refusing to recognise the authority of the English courts, did not defend the case. As a consequence, in April of that year, nearly all of their livestock was seized and sold by the sheriff's bailiff for a nominal amount. The appeal described the tenants as industrious and respectable people living in the heart of the Gaeltacht, now facing financial ruin unless immediate assistance was provided. The notice concluded with a request for public subscriptions to aid the tenants, to be sent to Michael Coyne of Kilmeen, Maam, and Martin Keane of Maam, County Galway, who were named as trustees of the relief fund.[160]

A side-column under the heading of 'Divide the Ranches,' published in a '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper on 26 July 1924, had argued that the huge grazing ranches of the rich midland counties of Ireland had been an eternal reproach. They had been said to have reminded the Irish people of the usurpation that had dispossessed the rightful owners in those areas and converted what travellers in Ireland a century earlier had described as the finest tillage country on earth into a wilderness. The repopulating of those lands with industrious peasantry was presented as both an act of justice and a master-stroke of sound economic policy. The commentary maintained that such a policy would also have solved the problem of congestion and poverty in the mountainous areas, undone the work of Cromwell, and brought the people back from barren regions where it had never been intended that human beings should have attempted to eke out an existence. At the same time, it was stressed that this work would have had to be undertaken with the greatest care, so as to ensure that land was not transferred from one inefficient owner to

[160] *Sinn Féin 5/7/1924*

several smaller inefficient holders, and that the process of subdivision was not carried too far - either by making allotments less than economic or by breaking up large farms which, in the interests of good husbandry, should have been allowed to remain. The article warned that a sudden smashing-up of all the ranches in Meath would have created an economic crisis in the West, and that no one, it said, would have been foolish enough to advocate such a step. In every part of Ireland, it argued, it would have been the duty of a national government to see that the land was utilised to the best advantage of the community.

Under the additional sub-heading 'Stop the Flow of Emigration,' the '*Sinn Féin*' commentary declared that it would have been intolerable for the flow of emigration to have continued while huge ranches remained untenanted. Given normal conditions of economic life, it asserted, the people would naturally have settled on the good lands, established their homes there, and developed their industries. Instead, it lamented, hundreds had been going each day "with a vengeance," full of anger and despair - some to fill the emigrant ships and enrich Canada and the United States with their toil, and others to eke out a meagre living on the harvest fields of England and Scotland, denied a livelihood at home. To cope with this situation, the article maintained that assisted schemes on a considerable scale would have been necessary to settle families and colonies on the untenanted lands, and not in any "namby-pamby" fashion. It observed that British Land Acts of the past had fixed the occupying tenant in possession, but that Irish Acts of the future would have had to put the non-occupying agricultural classes - farmers' sons, agricultural workers, and small holders - into possession. Large untenanted lands, it concluded, had been rightly regarded as a loss of national wealth through emigration and under-production, bleeding the country economically white.[161]

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[161] *Sinn Féin 26/7/1924*

During August 1924, the '*Sinn Féin*' paper ran an interesting section called 'Proverbs in Verse,' which included the following stanza:

> "*Every heap, from which there is spending will live,*
> *Be not timorous in scattering it;*
> *The man who hoards up riches*
> *Will be full of poverty beyond his imagining*."[162]

In late August 1924, according to the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper, much of Ireland's rural organisation had been wiped out during the difficult war years. The paper asserted that the Irish Transport & General Workers Union, which had begun extending its influence into rural districts after 1913, had initially attempted to fill this void. However, in its view, both of the main surviving unions - each claiming to defend the interests of agricultural producers - had gradually reduced their activity to disputes over wages. This narrow focus, the paper argued, had obscured the wider and more essential needs pertaining to Irish agriculture. The newspaper contended that several factors had contributed to this unsatisfactory situation. It maintained that the Farmers' Union, for one reason or another, had failed in most counties to attract small working farmers to its organisation. Over time, its executive leadership, the paper claimed, became dominated by large employers of labour and ranchers of the former landlord class, whose interests were opposed to labour during the wage disputes of the time. Likewise, the paper stated that the Irish Transport & General Workers Union had not succeeded in gaining the support of working farmers, even though their interests ought naturally to have aligned. It further suggested that internal weaknesses within the Transport Union meant that agricultural workers often found their affairs controlled by industrial leaders who were neither directly concerned with, nor sufficiently informed, about rural conditions.

In the view of the '*Sinn Féin*' paper, the great body of working farmers therefore remained disorganised and

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[162] *Sinn Féin 23/8/1924*

unattached, leaving Irish agriculture among the least coordinated in Europe - possibly, it argued, in the world. The paper maintained that until these farmers recognised the necessity and value of collective organisation, not only for their own welfare but for the broader good of the nation, agriculture would continue to fluctuate between opposing interests without real progress. It was the paper's belief that, if the working farmers chose to organise, they could secure for the producers of food and raw materials their rightful place within the nation's economy. At present, it claimed, the tiller of the soil was left vulnerable to exploitation by those seeking to profit from his labour. To support its argument, the '*Sinn Féin*' publication pointed to Denmark as an example, asserting that organisation there served as the keystone - and education as the foundation - of agricultural success. It noted that a Danish farmer could choose from around fifty associations and often belonged to ten or fifteen of them at once. Small wonder, the paper concluded, that Danish farmers outperformed their Irish counterparts not only in global markets but even within Ireland itself.[163]

In a January 1925 edition of '*Sinn Féin*,' it remarked that the sixth anniversary of the establishment of the revolutionary Dáil Éireann as the Parliament of the Irish Republic had occurred. It detailed that the Republic was proclaimed in April, 1916. However, it claimed that no legitimate general election occurred in Ireland until 1919, when that Proclamation was ratified and the Republican Dáil was established by an "overwhelming vote of the Irish people." Since then, it asserted, this Republic had "never been disestablished." It went as far as to claim that its "functioning powers have temporarily been curtailed by the forces of British arms in the hands of the Empire's agents and at the dictation of British statesmen." 'Sinn Féin' declared that it was a fitting moment to re-examine a version of the 'Democratic Programme' of the First Dáil, and outlined the following:

[163] *Sinn Féin 30/8/1924*

"*We declare, in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation, the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible, and, in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Piarais, we declare that the Nation's Sovereignty extends not only to all the men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and with him we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinate to the public right and welfare.*

We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people.

We affirm the duty of every man and woman to give allegiance and service to the Commonwealth, and declare it is the duty of the Nation to assure that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties in the service of the people. In return for willing service, we, in the name of the Republic, declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour.

It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland.

The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and

foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefor a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation's aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation's gratitude and consideration. Likewise it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.

It shall be our duty to promote the development of the Nation's resources, to increase the productivity of the soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, and fisheries, its waterways and harbours, in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people.

It shall be the duty of the Republic to adopt all measures necessary for the creation and invigoration of our industries, and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative and industrial lines. With the co-operation of an extensive Irish Consular Service, trade with foreign Nations shall be revived on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill, and while undertaking the organisation of the Nation's trade, import and export, it shall be the duty of the Republic to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessaries until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for.

It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek co-operation of the Governments of other countries in determining a standard of Social and Industrial Legislation, with a view to a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour."[164]

[164] *Sinn Féin 24/1/1925*

In an editorial from early May 1926, titled "The Press and the Strike," '*An Phoblacht*' reflected on what it described as the second major lesson of the British upheaval - the silencing of the Press, which the paper characterised as "the most powerful of all the modern weapons of Capitalism and Imperialism." The editorial argued that the Press had, up to that point, secured victory for the capitalist class in almost every major industrial dispute in Britain. During the General Strike, however, Labour had "replied by gagging the Press," a move '*An Phoblacht*' defended as necessary and justified. According to the paper, if there had been any real freedom of the Press, there would have been no need to call out newspaper workers at all. What was termed "Freedom of the Press," it maintained, was in reality "Freedom to kill democracy by misrepresentation and to subjugate the peoples by falsehoods." Turning to Ireland, '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that the daily Press had long acted as an instrument of oppression. It reminded readers that during the 1916 Rising, the Irish newspapers had abetted General Maxwell's actions; that during the War of Independence they had to be "taught with sledge-hammers" not to brand the defenders of Irish liberty as "assassins"; and that during the Truce period they had deliberately undermined public confidence in national leaders, leaving the people powerless at a critical moment in their history. The editorial further claimed that the Irish daily Press had played a decisive role in making the Anglo-Irish Treaty possible - securing public acquiescence through "reckless misrepresentation" - and that it had helped to ignite the Civil War by inflaming passions that later found expression in "widespread executions and assassinations." From these experiences, '*An Phoblacht*' concluded that the English working class had offered an important lesson: when ordinary people were fighting for their essential liberties, it was often "wise first to suspend the Press that does not know what liberty is." The paper added that, were true freedom of the Press to exist, the idea of suppressing it in a moment of crisis would indeed be abhorrent - but, in its view, "there was no Freedom of the Press in Ireland, and there never had been."[165]

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[165] *An Phoblacht 7/5/1926*

During this period, it was not only domestically that Irish republicans had promoted the combined organisation of workers and working farmers. A striking example of how Irish revolutionary experience crossed the Atlantic to shape American radicalism is the case of former IRA officer Paddy "P.J." Wallace. An immigrant whose background informed his politics in the USA, Wallace became a key organiser of the Progressive Farmers Association, a rapidly growing agrarian movement that by 1926 ranked as the fourth largest agricultural organisation in the United States. Wallace's influence was amplified through his close ties to Communist Party USA agitator 'Red Flag' Charlie Taylor, who had homesteaded in Minnesota and later ran a farmers' newspaper in Montana. Together, they worked to politicise American farmers, introducing radical ideas rooted in class struggle and socialism. At the Progressive Farmers' first convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in December 1926, Wallace - then based in Montana - was elected chairman of the association's directory. As per '*Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers*,' the Montana delegation, the largest at the convention, was dominated by Communist Party members, and Wallace himself is believed to have been a party member at one point. At the convention, the delegates adopted a class-based statement calling for a firm alliance between working farmers and labourers and expressing sympathy for the Red Peasant International. Wallace's example illustrates a broader pattern: Irish veterans of the IRA were not merely immigrants in America; they were carriers of revolutionary ideology, bringing radical organisational methods and ideas into U.S. political life. The influence of individuals like Wallace demonstrates that transnational networks of activism were instrumental in promoting radical politics among American farmers and labourers, reshaping the landscape of inter-war political movements.[166]

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[166] *Dyson, L (1982). 'Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers.' University of Nebraska Press.*

In a late May 1926 editorial titled "The Failure in Britain," '*An Phoblacht*' expressed sympathy for the individual British worker amid what it described as the humiliation that had overwhelmed his movement. The paper observed that British labour leaders had pompously declared battle, only to be defeated almost without a fight, leaving the once all-powerful General Strike "a broken sword at the feet of those who unsheathed it." According to '*An Phoblacht*,' the worker in Great Britain, if wise, would learn from this "appalling defeat." It argued that the true cause of the collapse was not Prime Minister Baldwin, who merely stood as the victor, but rather the British workers themselves, their leaders, and their philosophy. The editorial maintained that British workers had never done justice to other nations and, as a result, were unable to stand for justice for themselves. The paper claimed that, had British workers supported justice abroad - particularly in Ireland, India, and Egypt - the suffering of those peoples over the preceding decade might not have been possible. The failure of the General Strike, '*An Phoblacht*' suggested, should have taught them that if Great Britain wished to become a true democracy, it would have to rid itself of imperialism. Baldwin and Churchill, it contended, had triumphed by appealing to the jingoistic passions of the workers who did not strike, thereby defeating those who did. '*An Phoblacht*' further argued that the British Labour movement could only redeem itself by ending this "jingo spirit" and standing for international justice even where it harmed the Empire. Only then, the editorial suggested, might a future General Strike end differently. It concluded that it must have been "a galling thought" for many British Labour leaders that when the British Trade Union Congress refused Ireland's earlier appeal for assistance - by declining to halt the transport of munitions - it had laid the foundations for the disaster that later befell them.

In the same editorial, '*An Phoblacht*' linked the British defeat to the position of the Labour Party of the Irish Free State. It predicted that the collapse in England would be mirrored in Ireland through the growing weakness of Thomas Johnson's Labour Party. The paper argued that the "Free State Labour" leaders stood for much the same things as their English

counterparts, such as J. H. Thomas - professing a desire for social justice but always placing the solidarity of the Empire first. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' the Irish Labour Party had failed to learn any lessons since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Within five years, a party that had once been the strongest in the country was, as the editorial claimed, in danger of near extinction at the next general election. Its position, already weak before the British debacle, had become "ten times worse," as the loss of prestige suffered by Labour in Britain inevitably undermined its Irish counterpart, which had "so carefully modelled itself on the English sample." The paper concluded that, if the leaders of "Free State Labour" were "big enough," they could yet save their cause - "even at this late hour."[167]

In a report titled "Attempt to Break Coal Strike Fails," '*An Phoblacht*' described in August 1926 how efforts to undermine the united front of the Miners' Federation in Nottinghamshire and South Derbyshire had, after seven weeks of preparation, come to nothing. The paper stated that the attack on the miners had been organised by the colliery owners, with the assistance of the Economic League, the police, and other authorities, but that their campaign had failed to produce results. According to the report, between 12,000 and 14,000 miners were said to have signed on for work, yet none had returned to the pits. Mine managers were described as "disappointed," and '*An Phoblacht*' noted that they attributed their failure to what they termed "Mr. Cook's campaign," dismissing this as the "usual intimidation." Additional police, the paper reported, were being rushed into the affected areas. The editorial tone of the piece was scornful of the authorities' earlier optimism. On the preceding Saturday, it noted, "the now crestfallen managers and bright young men of the Economic School" had been jubilant, and the Press had uncritically repeated their claims that "thousands" of miners were returning to work. By the time of writing, however, '*An Phoblacht*' observed that these same sources were struggling to invent excuses, and it predicted that "the old story of intimidation and attempted

[167] *An Phoblacht 21/5/1926*

violence" would soon reappear in the press. In contrast to the owners' disappointment, the miners' committees were portrayed as viewing the situation as entirely satisfactory. The paper stated that only a handful of pickets - "no more than half a dozen at each pit" - remained, and that their role was limited to recording the names of the few men who had gone back to work. '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the Federation leadership believed even these few would soon "stand loyally with them again within a few days."

In the same issue, '*An Phoblacht*' carried a report titled "The Wreck of the 'Flying Scotsman'." The article referred to the case of eight miners from Cramlington who had been convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from four to eight years for allegedly "maliciously displacing a rail" on 10 May, near the close of the General Strike, with the supposed intent of causing the derailment of the Flying Scotsman express. The paper stated that evidence had since accumulated to suggest the men had been wrongfully convicted. In the district, '*An Phoblacht*' reported, it was widely believed that "provocative agents of the Government" had been involved. According to what the paper described as "exhaustive inquiries" in the area, it had been established that the Flying Scotsman had not left the line at the point where the rail was alleged to have been loosened. In other words, '*An Phoblacht*' claimed, the rail must have been tampered with after the accident, not before. The report went on to assert that the crash had been caused entirely by the "bad driving of the scabs running the train," and that the subsequent prosecution of the miners had been "framed up" by unidentified parties. At the time of publication, '*An Phoblacht*' noted that the convicted men, who had been held in Durham, had since been transferred to Maidstone Convict Prison in Kent to complete their sentences.[168]

In an edition of '*An Phoblacht*' from 10 September 1926 (cited in a separate chapter), the 'peasant' farmers in West Tirconaill carried their activities a step further one Sunday when a meeting was held in the Parochial Hall, Dungloe,

[168] *An Phoblacht 27/8/1926*

after eleven o'clock Mass. It was noted that given how the posters for the meeting contained the announcement that Eugene O'Doherty, T.D., and Peadar O'Donnell, T.D., were both invited to attend supposedly added to the growing belief that a well-knit campaign was about to be launched. Mr. O'Doherty, however, ultimately could not make the meeting. Mr. James Durnin, Croveigh, presided. He said the meeting was convened by a small group, of whom he was one. The previous week many civil bills had been issued in his district. Other districts were on the verge of receiving similar attention. It was considered, under these circumstances, that some steps should be taken to bring the people together to consider what steps should be taken in the common interest. When notices to pay up arrears had been served some time ago the notes were collected and posted back, but the people drifted afterwards, and this crisis had more or less caught them napping. He hadn't any fixed scheme in his mind. He could, he believed, see a few things that called for some scheme. Their young people were all going away from them, and those that were left behind were getting a very hard time to live. In many cases, if it wasn't for the assistance that was given by the young folk abroad, there would have been no preservation of the roof over such people's heads. The value their little farms had was value they and their fathers had put into sod, marsh, and bare rock by their toil and sweat. It didn't seem clear to him that any person could expect to live on them themselves, and go on crushing themselves, to pay money, to pay rents to people who could have no right claim against them. It seemed a wicked thing to do. They had invited Mr. Eugene O'Doherty to the meeting because he was one of the elected representatives. They had also invited Peadar O'Donnell for the same reason. They wished to hear the fullest information they could gather, and they wanted help to arrive at some decision. Peadar O'Donnell addressed the meeting at some length.

It had been decided by the meeting that they had not considered the landlords as having any moral claim for rents from the peasant farmers, and that land annuities had been no more sacred than the privileged interests on which they had rested. In so far as questions of economy and policy had

arisen, peasant farmers in council might have considered paying agreed rents to a committee of themselves for the purpose of organising industrial enterprise which would have kept their people at home and in reasonable comfort. When discussing their power to effectively organise themselves to carry out the purposes of the meeting, the speakers had pointed out that if, in 1920 or 1921, landlords' claims had been advanced or land annuities sought, the people would have treated the matter as a joke. The interests that could then have been treated with contempt had been the interests that were coming back into the open again. These things had not changed. They had remarked that only the condition of the people had changed. That had been the only factor to be remodelled; fortunately, it had been one that the people could remodel. They had declared that, by restoring the spirit shown on that issue which had obtained five years earlier, victory could have been assured. A committee of eleven had been selected. A committee meeting had been held immediately after the general meeting. It had been decided to push forward vigorously both by handbills and meetings. Three members of the committee had decided to start the first handbill distribution themselves, dividing the districts for the purpose. The meeting subsequently adjourned. Asking if "Landlords and British loan interests [were] sacred while people starve," '*An Phoblacht*' had documented that a programme to combat these social wrongs served as the "basis for [the] National Movement in the North."

During December 1926, '*An Phoblacht*' remarked that the fallout caused by the fresh 'Emergency Act' could be used to the advantage of the Republican cause, but only if the unity among militant Republican groups grew in tandem with the intensifying attacks. They argued that for this to be effective, the movement needed to clearly align itself with the struggles of both town workers and working farmers, focusing on reclaiming rights shared by all the people.[169]

In the opinion of the writer for '*An Phoblacht*' in January 1927, physical force groups had always existed in Ireland,

[169] *An Phoblacht 10/12/1926*

constantly engaged in conflict with the forces of the British Empire, which could never afford to grant them peace. The writer argued that these groups recognised their effectiveness depended on acting as the spearhead of the people's push for freedom, and therefore sought to draw in as many organisations and individuals as possible. According to the writer, those closest to the physical force movement were naturally those prepared to use violence themselves but not necessarily suited to lengthy organisational work. Beyond them were sympathisers whose support, though not involving fighting, could be relied upon. Further still was a wider fringe of people who could only be gathered through pressure and the influence of committed individuals.

The writer pointed out that before 1916, groups such as the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army formed the frontline of the struggle. Maud Gonne MacBride was cited as a prime example of a patriot willing to join the fight, without prior formal enlistment. However, the writer contended that before 1916 there had been no outburst of popular support because the physical force groups remained too separated from ordinary citizens, largely due to the subdued state of national feeling at the time. The writer observed that, by 1918, the situation had changed significantly, with the IRA becoming a compact, disciplined organisation embedded in the growing popular movement. The IRA's influence extended into political and labour organisations. The spirit that made a good volunteer also made a committed trade unionist, the writer asserted, noting that those who sought to undo national injustice also fought social injustice. The writer insisted that any serious organiser of Irish freedom must recognise the critical role of workers and peasants.

It was the writer's view that wage earners and peasant farmers had always formed the backbone of the fight against British rule, and that no campaign could succeed without uniting them. Every Irish working farmer and wage earner, the writer claimed, was inevitably a separatist, and it was possible to unite them through a campaign based on this truth. The writer cautioned that such unity could not be achieved through theory alone or passive support, but

required active, daily intervention in the struggles of these groups. National energy, the writer argued, should not be dissipated on small reformist efforts, as national revolution was a cumulative process that only appeared sudden.

The writer believed that active involvement of separatist organisations in workers' struggles was essential. Defending strikers from police violence was seen as more than supporting industrial action; it was a direct challenge to British rule. The writer also asked rhetorically whether intervention by Republican groups in Belfast to prevent military break-ups of strike pickets would be anything less than a step towards national liberation. Finally, the writer suggested that supporting peasant farmers' resistance to unjust English taxes was of greater significance than merely saving money. They noted that each generation of Irishmen had faced the challenge of grounding the freedom movement in the real needs of the people while avoiding distractions that diluted national energy. In conclusion, the writer asserted that once these factors-rooting the movement in popular needs and active nationalist intervention-were properly reconciled, an unstoppable movement for freedom would emerge.[170]

In September 1927, an editorial by '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the campaign against the payment of Land Annuities was growing steadily, drawing strength from rural hardship and Republican opposition to continued economic subservience to Britain. The paper reiterated that these payments were fundamentally unjust - a legacy of colonialism and exploitation, enforceable only where resistance had yet to take hold. The editorial argued that even a partial redirection of the ongoing annuity payments - if reduced to a third of their prevailing amount - could have been channelled into a genuinely national agricultural credit bank. Such a bank, costing little beyond collection and administrative expenses, could have provided affordable credit to small farmers, and supported co-operative rural development.

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[170] *An Phoblacht 7/1/1927*

'*An Phoblacht*' had denounced what it had viewed as misrepresentations of Republican land policy - particularly those targeting speakers at public meetings in counties like Clare. The paper had clarified that its position was straightforward: Land Annuities should not be paid to Great Britain. In the most impoverished regions - especially the congested districts of the West - the entire produce derived from the land was often insufficient even to sustain life. There, '*An Phoblacht*' insisted, payments must cease entirely. The editorial called on working farmers to establish their own agricultural credit systems, financed nationally and operated independently of the Free State. These institutions, it argued, should support co-operatives and replace the exploitative structures left behind by colonial landlords, and perpetuated by Dublin's compliant government. Such a system, the paper claimed, would not only prevent further economic looting of rural Ireland but would lay the groundwork for a co-operative, self-sustaining republic. Attention was drawn to the growing political pressure being applied on this issue. Statements by public figures such as J. J. Walsh were noted, though '*An Phoblacht*' made clear that rhetorical opposition from Free State figures would not be enough. The final word, it argued, lay with the Irish people - only mass resistance could stop what it saw as a continued tribute to the British Exchequer.[171]

In a front-page announcement titled 'An Injury to One is a Concern of All,' '*An Phoblacht*' from 31 December 1927 (already cited) expressed its view that the mobilisation of working farmers was essential to achieving national opposition to the "Ultimate Financial Settlement" between Partitioned Ireland and Great Britain. The paper called on interested groups to contact its office to coordinate action, emphasising that speakers could be dispatched to local meetings or lectures if adequate notice was provided. The announcement reflected the paper's strategy of combining grassroots organisation with central coordination. It highlighted regions such as Offaly, Roscommon, Leitrim, and Galway as areas with numerous active groups, which

[171] *An Phoblacht 10/9/1927*

needed to be quickly gathered into a provisional national organising committee. '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that this committee should include key figures from the industrial labour movement, thereby linking rural and urban working-class interests in a unified national struggle. The paper pointed to Tirconaill as the most highly organised district in Ireland at the time, urging other areas to follow its example. In locations where no formal organisations existed, '*An Phoblacht*' encouraged individuals to propagate the ideas that would form the basis of future committees. Overall, the announcement expressed the paper's view that rapid organisation of the "toiling hosts of the Gael" was a pressing necessity, framing collective action among working farmers and labourers as critical to resisting British economic and political control. Adjacent to this piece was a report on the Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis.

In a September 1930 article in '*An Phoblacht*,' IRA leader Peadar O'Donnell expressed his views on the need for a revolutionary alliance between small farmers, workers, and the remnants of Ireland's militant republican tradition. He reported that during visits to the counties of Kerry, Cork, Tipperary, and Kilkenny, he had observed rural Ireland under significant social and economic stress. O'Donnell argued that these pressures were "disintegrating old grouping[s]" and prompting local farmers to organise against landlordism, forced sales, and evictions. He maintained that workers and soldiers sympathised with these struggles, although many workers needed direct discussion to overcome their doubts. O'Donnell's views were critical of established political organisations. He contended that Fianna Fáil was not organised to lead a mass "No Rent" struggle, but he believed that workers within it could take leadership. He argued that ordinary members were capable of recognising that the organisation's leadership had failed to defend the homes of evicted families. O'Donnell stressed that revolutionary mobilisation should target the rank-and-file members rather than the formal leadership, which he regarded as insufficiently committed to direct action. Central to O'Donnell's strategy were "committees of action." He maintained that these committees had to be broad enough to

include disillusioned members from organisations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians and former Cumann na nGaedheal supporters, in order to build an effective grassroots movement. He argued that the committees' ultimate goal should be a free Irish Republic, with power resting in councils of working farmers and the working class. He emphasised that the national struggle was now inseparable from the fight of small farmers against sheriffs and landlords, and that any revolutionary effort had to be grounded in these concrete struggles. O'Donnell also criticised radical or ideologically rigid factions, such as the Workers' Revolutionary Committee. He argued that attempts to build a purely "workers-only" revolutionary movement were doomed because they lacked the trust of the existing physical-force republican tradition. He insisted that non-constitutional revolutionary leadership had to emerge from the ongoing struggles of working farmers and the working class, combining practical action with a coherent programme for national liberation. In summary, O'Donnell's views reflected a pragmatic, grassroots-oriented revolutionary strategy. He consistently emphasised action grounded in economic struggle, local organisation, and the integration of working-class and small-farmer interests. He maintained that revolutionary success in Ireland depended on aligning socialist ideals with the realities of rural and urban activism, rather than relying solely on parliamentary politics or abstract ideological movements.[172]

In a June 1931 edition of the pro-constitutional Republican '*The Nation*' paper, a commentary opined that a remarkable feature of all Cumann na nGaedheal election speeches was that the speakers hardly ever attempted to defend the Government's record on its merits. The paper claimed that they took it for granted that Fianna Fail's national and economic policy was allegedly "winning the people," and aimed at "creating scares which will prevent the electors voting freely at the General Election." The paper claimed that they tried to confuse the Land Annuities issue by shrieking "repudiation," "communism" and "Russia." These

[172] *An Phoblacht 6/9/1930*

orators, the paper quipped, "must estimate the intelligence of Kildare farmers at a very low level, if they think the clear legal case for the retention of this unjustifiable annual tribute in Ireland can be prejudiced in such a fashion."[173]

The front page of an August 1931 edition of '*An Phoblacht*' ran an article that a monster meeting was held in Sligo on Saturday, 15th August. Mayor John Lynch presided. From the chair, Lynch recited the number of forced sales and evictions that had recently been carried out, or were threatened in the area. His call for workers and working farmers to resist these attacks was received with enthusiasm. He declared that he stood directly behind the slogans of the movement and urged that the mass of wage-earners and working farmers unite quickly. John Boland, a prominent member of the Sligo County Council, also took the platform of the working farmers. He declared that their first duty was to defend the homes under attack. British rule in Ireland, he said, had always been a source of injustice and suffering, and never more so than at present, when £5,000,000 was being taken from the Irish people every year as "loot."

Peadar O'Donnell, speaking about land seizures, argued that the grabbers were invariably businessmen or large landowners. In the same way, he said, the evils of British imperialism had always been visited upon Ireland through that section of Irish society which had prospered under the Empire. He warned the crowd to remember the lesson of 1922–23: that the Irish middle class had allegedly taken on the role of holding Ireland for the Empire. Therefore, to break the Empire, he argued, one had to break the power of the middle class. He cautioned against confusing unity among wage-earners and working farmers with any artificial attempt to unite "all interests in the country." The new fight in Ireland, O'Donnell declared, lit up the road to freedom so clearly that treachery would find no dark corners to hide in. He urged resistance against grabbers and their backers, against all forced sales, and against the Land Commission

[173] *The Nation 20/6/1931*

itself. Those who gathered to resist, he said, were the true "army of freedom."

Sean MacBride addressed the younger generation, appealing to them to take the lead in breaking out of the slavery that bound the Irish people. They lived, he said, in a world where the masses were denied the power to live fully and freely, their lives curtailed by the stupidity and greed of capitalism. That system, he argued, had to be replaced by a new order in which wage-earners and working farmers produced to meet their own needs, not to enrich others. The task, he insisted, rested especially on the youth: they must either wither into lifelessness or conquer poverty completely. He called on young people to take the lead in every struggle, whether resisting a forced sale or fighting against wage cuts. "To resist, you must organise," he declared. He pointed to the immense size of the meeting, which he noted was made up largely of youth, and told them to take on their share of responsibility. Some had arms, some had not, but all, he said, shared the same determination to break free of both the capitalist system and the Empire that enslaved them.[174]

In mid-January 1932, the '*Republican File*' newspaper, in a section titled "Voices From The Past," quoting Michael Davitt's '*Leaves From a Prison Diary,*' advocated for common ownership of land and the means of production as the nearest approach to social justice and the most beneficial ordering of industrial affairs for universal good. Davitt questioned how much longer humanity would drag progress in the mire of self-interest and cut-throat competition, labelling it as guilty of atheism, despite being taught that God is love. He repudiated the doctrine of self-interest, affirming instead that self-sacrifice and co-operation provided the most beneficent motive power for human progress, to which future appeals should be made. Citing the line "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers," he acknowledged that awareness of the right path preceded the courage to walk it, but history taught that it was time to cease stoning the prophets and commence following them. To his

[174] *An Phoblacht 22/8/1931*

mind, the remedy for the evils of land monopoly lay not in increasing the number of private property holders in land, but rather in the abolition of the institution of private property in land altogether.[175]

Also in January 1932, the '*Republican File*' documented in an article titled "Irish Workers' Conference: Political Prisoners Resolution," which reported on a meeting of Dublin, Belfast, and provincial members of a number of trade unions held at the Mansion House in Dublin City. They were affiliated to the far-left Workers' Union of Ireland. Mr. P. Timmons of the Workers' Union of Ireland presided over the event, which focused on discussing various aspects of the labour movement in Ireland. In a lengthy opening address, City Councillor James Larkin, Jr., stated that the attendees faced an intensified attempt by the Free State Government to reduce wages, and that the government was pursuing economisation at the expense of social services. Mr. B. Conway of the Workers' Union of Ireland (W.U.I.) and Mr. Eamon Ward, a delegate of the Grocers' Assistants subsequently proposed and seconded a further resolution, which was adopted unanimously. The resolution protested against the conditions of political prisoners in the Free State, demanding an inquiry into the allegations made by released prisoners. It called on the working-class to work for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and to raise the issue in their Union branches. Additionally, it pledged the Conference to work for the repeal of the Constitution Amendment Act, while protesting against the prohibition of meetings and the suppression of labour and nationalist orientated newspapers.[176]

'*An Phoblacht*' reported in March 1932 that Mr. Sean McGuinness, former T.D. for Offaly-Leix, arrived in Tullamore on a Sunday night. To celebrate his release from Mountjoy Gaol, a public demonstration was held, which drew thousands of participants. A torchlight procession,

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[175] *Republican File 16/1/1932*

[176] *Republican File 23/1/1932*

including the Tullamore Brass and Reed Band and the Clonaslee Pipers Band, escorted him through the town amid scenes of great enthusiasm. A public meeting was subsequently held outside the Fianna Fáil rooms on William Street, with Mr. P. F. Adams, Co. C., presiding as chairman. The chairman declared that the welcome home extended to Sean McGuinness that evening was worthy of a gallant soldier of the Irish Republic. For fourteen years, McGuinness had maintained the Republican flag in Offaly. After being banished from the country for two years, enduring ten years of trials and hardships, and spending twelve months in Mountjoy Prison, the people were proud and glad to have him back among them as a free Republican, owing no apology to anyone. They assured him that the Republican spirit in Offaly was more alive than it had ever been. Three cheers were given for McGuinness, who then addressed the crowd. He noted that soldiers and citizens had gathered to welcome him home from prison. The event was less a personal welcome than a vindication of the principle for which those who had died in Offaly had stood - the principle of a free and independent Ireland. He condemned the Treaty imposed by the Free State ten years earlier, describing it as a foul and fraudulent document, aided by the national hostilities of the Bishops and the press. He argued that it was a British Act of Parliament rather than a genuine Treaty and recalled the attack on the Four Courts with British guns, which, he said, had been justified as conserving English lives. He emphasised that the Treaty's supposed aim of freedom was contradicted by threats of immediate war and resulted in widespread injustice, while he and other Republicans were maligned from both pulpit and platform.

Before the "Cease Fire" order, a demand for justice in Offaly had led six men to face firing squads, preferring death to dishonour. When the bodies of five of these men were brought to Tullamore for burial, local clergy barred the chapel doors. McGuinness, as an elected representative of the Republic, had sought clarification from the Bishop of Meath, who never replied. The result of a recent election, however, had undermined clerical interference with organisations dedicated to Ireland's freedom and the mobilisation of the

masses. The demonstration in Tullamore highlighted the enduring Republican spirit in Offaly, which, like in Elizabethan times, was seen as unconquered. The election victory was interpreted not solely as a triumph for the new government but as a united Republican effort that had routed Cumann na nGaedheal. McGuinness argued that the Treaty had created a new aristocracy grafted onto the old, leading to desolation over the preceding decade. Despite treachery, the spirit of nationality persisted, and the people's continued vigilance was necessary, given Ireland's partition and the existence of two parliaments. True freedom, he argued, required fundamental sovereignty and social and economic justice, reflecting the creed taught by James Connolly. McGuinness recalled standing that night as he had sixteen years earlier when he was sworn to defend the Republic. Following the Mountjoy rescue in 1925, carried out by Mr. George Gilmore, he endured years of persecution while remaining within the Brigade area. Despite raids by the political police, he was protected by the workers and farmers of Offaly, who sheltered and supported him, passing him safely from townland to townland. He expressed profound gratitude to those who had protected him, asserting that the only way to repay them was to continue working for a government representing workers and farmers. He emphasised that throughout history, the fight for liberty had been led not by ranchers or brewers, but by the workers and working farmers, who sought to abolish exploitation and place governmental power in the hands of productive forces.

Mr. Peadar O'Donnell had also highlighted the broader significance of McGuinness's release. Men like him had been imprisoned because the ruling authorities viewed their ideas as dangerous. A decade-long campaign had sought to discredit the IRA, but O'Donnell argued that the recent situation offered new opportunities for Irish youth to organise freely. He stressed that only the masses could achieve true freedom, which required not merely separation from England but also the elimination of poverty. The

meeting was also addressed by Mr. L. Brady, former T.D. for Leix-Offaly, and Mr. J. P. Bowles, Co. C.[177]

An October 1932 edition of '*An Phoblacht*' featured numerous pieces that appealed to organised workers and farmers. In a strongly worded editorial, titled 'We Starve; They Prosper - Economic System Must be Changed,' '*An Phoblacht*' accused Fianna Fáil of failing to address Ireland's deep-rooted economic problems, and of preserving the capitalist system instead of dismantling it. The editorial argued that the government was unwilling to confront powerful interests such as the banks, large aristocratic landowners, and the institutions associated with British imperialism. Instead of introducing radical change, it claimed, the party had merely attempted superficial reforms that left the structures of inequality intact. The paper pointed to growing unrest among the unemployed as evidence of Fianna Fáil's inability to stimulate meaningful industrial development. It criticised what it described as a lack of urgency in launching housing schemes and other public works capable of addressing joblessness. One of the most pointed criticisms was reserved for government policy on agriculture. The editorial had condemned the continued subsidies to large ranchers, particularly through the bounty on bullock exports, which it characterised as a betrayal of smaller farmers and landless labourers. It further alleged that where land was divided, it was frequently awarded to pro-Treaty or anti-nationalist elements, while numerous destitute Republican veterans of the various conflicts had remained neglected. It went as far to assert that volunteer Brigade Commandants by this time had faced extreme hardship.

The article also revisited its claim that an entrenched political and economic "machine," loyal to British interests, still operated in the Free State, ensuring employment and advantage only for those who had demonstrated loyalty to the Crown. While Fianna Fáil had promoted a tariff-based industrial policy, '*An Phoblacht*' suggested that the real beneficiaries were a select few industrialists or the

[177] *An Phoblacht 26/3/1932*

government itself via increased revenue, rather than the broader public. The party's inability to stimulate production, it argued, rendered the tariffs inflationary rather than constructive.

The editorial called for a comprehensive land settlement programme as a necessary foundation for rural economic recovery. It rejected the Land Act of 1923 as a product of British influence and advocated for its repeal. A significant investment of public credit-offered at low interest and on long repayment terms-was presented as essential for resettling thousands of families, constructing homes, and equipping farms. However, land reform alone was deemed insufficient. The article insisted that rural recovery must be accompanied by a national industrial policy, capable of providing employment in towns and enabling farmers to sell their produce. Without such integrated development, it warned, both town and countryside would continue to suffer from deepening impoverishment.

The piece also addressed what it described as a growing nervousness among industrial and political figures over potential negotiations with Britain. It attributed this anxiety to the fear that imperialist factions, particularly Cumann na nGaedheal, might return to power. The editorial interpreted the recent overtures toward London as a sign of political weakness and a failure to pursue genuine national development. As a solution, '*An Phoblacht*' advocated for the state to assume full control over national credit. Only by centralising credit and investment under public authority, it argued, could the government effectively implement wide-reaching policies in industry, land reform, housing, afforestation, drainage, and infrastructure. In conclusion, the editorial warned that without such a radical break from existing policy, the people of Ireland would continue to feel excluded from the benefits of their own country's resources, and that Britain would retain the opportunity to reassert influence through its domestic allies. The right to live in dignity in Ireland, it contended, remained unrealised for the majority of the population.

A neighbouring article, titled ‘Cromwellian Code - Ground Rents,’ published in ‘*An Phoblacht*’ drew attention to the ongoing injustice of ground rents in Dublin, and the wider implications for national sovereignty and social equity. The contributor highlighted what they described as a pervasive reluctance across political and public spheres to seriously confront the issue. The piece pointed to specific examples: in Parnell Street, each household was reportedly compelled to pay into what was known as "The Queen Anne Bounty", a vestige of monarchical privilege. In Eccles Street, some properties were said to be burdened with annual ground rents of £100 and £85 - figures the writer described as excessive and emblematic of a feudal holdover. Several organisations were cited as having raised concerns. The Stationary Engine Drivers' and Firemen’s Trade Union had recently passed a resolution calling for reform. Similarly, the Fr. Murphy branch of Fianna Fáil had taken up the matter. However, efforts to bring the issue directly to the Minister for Justice, James Geoghegan, were reportedly rebuffed when he refused to meet with a delegation. The writer argued forcefully that the nationalisation of land was essential for any meaningful form of Irish freedom. Ground rents, they asserted, should be nominal and, where paid at all, should be directed to the state or municipal bodies - not to absentee or aristocratic landlords, many of whom were alleged to retain imperialist sympathies. The article recounted a recent incident in which Lord Longford, a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, had successfully taken legal action against an elderly pensioner over unpaid rent for a cottage that Longford himself had not built. The writer presented this as a symbol of the enduring power of colonial-era property laws in post-independence Ireland. In recalling a statement by Richard Mulcahy during the previous government - that no house would be compensated beyond its site value - the letter’s author argued that the foundational logic of Irish property law still favoured the landowner over the common good. This, they wrote, exposed the core of the problem: the survival of a leasehold system that originated in the Cromwellian era, and had not yet been dismantled. The piece concluded with a call for broader civic engagement from trade unions, commending the Stationary Engine Drivers’ union for taking a principled

stand, and urging others to follow its example in challenging the entrenched legacy of planter-era land laws.

On the same page, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on the Connolly Fellowship Club, which opened its autumn lecture series that month with a presentation titled "Connolly Militant-Three Phases", delivered by H. Sheehy Skeffington at 44 Parnell Square. The lecture marked a reflective and detailed exploration of James Connolly's revolutionary trajectory, spanning from his return to Ireland in 1910 up to his execution in 1916. The address charted Connolly's evolving activism across three key phases: his role in the labour upheavals of the early 1910s, the formation and aims of the Irish Citizen Army, and his participation in the Easter Rising. Special emphasis was given to Connolly's internationalism, his socialist convictions, and the breadth of his leadership as both a political thinker and a militant organiser. Following the lecture, a spirited discussion subsequently ensued, featuring contributions from several of Connolly's surviving comrades, including veterans of the Irish Socialist Republican Party and the Citizen Army. Madame Despard McBride spoke on Connolly's earlier activism in the 1890s, particularly his work in 1896, while Helena Molony shared vivid personal recollections of the days leading up to the Easter Rising, during which Liberty Hall served as a revolutionary command centre. The evening was chaired by Mr. J. McMullen, who offered historical context on the formation and ongoing activities of the Connolly Fellowship Club. The lecture marked the first in a weekly series of talks to be held throughout the season. Future speakers were to include Sean Murray, Mary Donnelly, T. J. Yannick, and Helena Molony, among others, who had been expected to explore various aspects of revolutionary theory and practice in the Irish and international socialist movements.

Furthermore, it reported on how, addressing a gathering, George Gilmore, member of the Army Executive of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), delivered a forthright speech tracing the revolutionary origins and contemporary role of the I.R.A. as the only army in Ireland that, in his view, had a legitimate claim to the title of "National Army". Gilmore

traced the lineage of the I.R.A. back to the fusion of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army in 1916, underscoring that these forces were the defenders of the Republic proclaimed during Easter Week. The reconstituted I.R.A., he argued, had consistently stood on that 1916 Proclamation, which to him represented not just a political, but also a social and economic revolution-a vision for “The Risen People,” as Pearse had termed it.

Gilmore rejected any notion that the economic struggles of Ireland could be solved within the existing capitalist framework, calling it a “dangerous fallacy.” He pointed to widespread suffering in both capitalist Britain and the United States, whether under Free Trade or Protection, as proof that the system itself was the source of the people’s misery. Invoking the legacies of Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, Gilmore insisted that they had envisioned a Republic for the working class, not one for what he described as "parasites and exploiters." Connolly, he reminded listeners, had not fought for an Irish version of British capitalism, and Pearse’s warning to the English oppressor - “Beware of the risen people” - had no place for a Republic that mimicked the very class structures it was meant to overthrow. While cautioning that no organisation is immune to decline, Gilmore argued that the I.R.A. could and must be kept revolutionary if it remained under the democratic control of its rank and file. It must serve as the armed expression of the revolt of the oppressed classes, not a diversion or a tool of an emerging Irish capitalist elite. If the I.R.A. failed to uphold these revolutionary principles, he warned, it risked becoming a decoy-distracting the principled young activists, while entrenched interests continued to secure their privileges under a different flag.

Gilmore concluded with a call to action. He urged the people to demand that the southern government expropriate large, under-utilised ranches and redistribute them to the landless, enabling them to farm productively. At the same time, he called for the removal of the banking system’s monopoly over credit, proposing that credit become a public function, made accessible at cost to small farmers and workers alike.

Only through such concrete action, Gilmore argued, could Ireland move beyond symbolic independence and make a real advance toward the very national and economic freedom envisaged in 1916.[178]

An article titled "The Bank Promises to Pay Bearer: Exposure of the Currency System - II," written by Alec Lynn and published in '*An Phoblacht*' in October 1933, had continued his exposé of the banking system, portraying it as a corrupt and mysterious institution that had stimulated discussion and thought on monetary problems. Lynn had argued that the banking system, cloaked in sacred mystery, had thrown around a corrupt banking custom and thought on the monetary problem. He had explained that one of the constituent colleges of London University, through its orthodox professor, had a very serious charge to proffer. He had produced a representation of a one-pound note from the Bank of England, pointing out that the paper and printing had cost about one farthing, and that the British Government had delegated some of its sovereign rights to the Bank of England. A critic of Lynn's work had levelled a devastating response to what had appeared the previous week regarding the supposed attitude of Mr Murphy on receiving the ten scraps of paper from the bank. Mr Murphy had been quite satisfied because he could use his scraps of paper at the grocer's, shoemaker's, or tailor's. Although entirely beside the point, the criticism had been instructive. Just a few years earlier, the public had been told that Mr Murphy's scrap of paper was backed by gold. The absurdity of this answer had, seven years before, been pointed out by Lynn himself. However, the fact that some had been satisfied with this answer had by no means determined the matter. Lynn had provided a practical illustration, stating that banks had avoided and, in every case, had taken nothing beyond an examination. He had observed that the previous week, Mr Michael Murphy had constructed a side-counter for a bank. The bank had owed £10. The manager had given him a cheque for £10. On presenting the cheque, the cashier had given him ten one-pound notes, the printing of which had

[178] *An Phoblacht 15/10/1932*

cost about one farthing. The bank had "paid" a debt. Thus, the bank had "paid" Mr Murphy the £10 it owed by giving him "scraps of paper" which had cost the bank one penny each, or ten-pence in total.

As a point of reassurance for those who might have believed this view contradicted the generally received opinion, Lynn had hastened to add that there had been nothing new or original - nothing, in short, revolutionary - in this penny-in-the-pound criticism. Several years earlier, an official British Government body had been set up to enquire into the question of money and credit and to provide evidence concerning profit-making in food, clothing, or any other commodities in ordinary use. On one foggy day, an orthodox Professor of Economics had appeared before that tribunal. The professor, who lectured at a university, had thought he had a very serious charge to proffer. He had produced a representation of a one-pound note from the Bank of England, pointing out that the paper and printing had cost about one farthing, and that the British Government had delegated some of its sovereign rights to the Bank of England. A critic had levelled a devastating response to what had appeared the previous week regarding Mr Murphy's supposed satisfaction on receiving the ten scraps of paper from the bank. Mr Murphy had been content because he could use his scraps of paper at the grocer's, shoemaker's, or tailor's. Although entirely beside the point, this criticism had been considered instructive. Just a few years earlier, it had been widely claimed that Mr Murphy's scrap of paper had been backed by gold. The absurdity of that answer had been pointed out by Lynn seven years earlier. Yet, that some people had accepted such an answer had by no means settled the matter. Lynn had concluded that the bigger the catch in a swindling transaction, the greater had been the satisfaction of the naïve party until the trick had been learned. It had also been suggested that no wrong had been done to Mr Murphy because, from the bank, he had been able to exchange his notes for food and clothing, which in fact he had done.

Yet, according to Lynn, Mr Murphy had been swindled - not as the individual master carpenter who had installed the

counter in the bank, but as a member of the wider community. The banknotes had been, in effect, commands issued to shopkeepers directing them to give Mr Murphy what he wanted up to £10. He had asked who had given the bank the authority to command Mr Murphy's shoemaker, or his supplier, to provide a pair of shoes. This, Lynn had argued, was what had truly happened. In order to buy food, the shoemaker had to obtain banknotes. Mr Murphy had been one of the few from whom the shoemaker could procure those notes. Consequently, the position of the shoemaker, even if he had been a capitalist workman, had been indistinguishable from that of a slav. (There had even been, Lynn claimed, Papal authority for this dictum). Before proceeding further with his series, Lynn had presented a problem for his readers. He had asked them to suppose that a skilful forger had paid his debts, thereby putting forged pound notes into circulation. Would such forgeries never be detected? What, Lynn had asked, had really been "behind" those notes? He had suggested that anyone who made a serious effort to understand that question would have learned a great deal about the true nature of banking.

This piece had been highly opinionated, polemical, and moralising in tone. It presented the banking system as inherently corrupt and exploitative, framing ordinary citizens like "Mr Murphy" as victims of deception by financial elites. The language was charged and rhetorical, with phrases such as "sacred mystery," "swindled," and "scraps of paper" deliberately chosen to provoke indignation. Lynn's writing was composed in the style of a didactic exposé intended to awaken readers to what he viewed as systemic injustice within the prevailing monetary system. It blended economic commentary with moral argument, making it as much a political pamphlet as an analytical essay.[179]

In November 1933, '*An Phoblacht*' argued that there had been much discussion, not only in Ireland but throughout the world, about social problems - yet those problems remained unsolved. History, the paper claimed, seemed to repeat itself

[179] *An Phoblacht 21/10/1933*

in many shapes and forms, leading one to wonder if events would end up where they had begun. The paper recalled that when the great French Revolution had burst forth - shocking the world and, for the first time, spreading the doctrine of republicanism abroad - three all-inspiring words had echoed triumphantly from the afflicted hearts of the oppressed: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' the works of continental writers influential in that era had advanced one overwhelming idea: that all men were equal. That doctrine, though imperfectly understood, had been at the root of everything. The paper noted that the Revolution in France had broken out in a frenzy. Men had lost themselves; some had descended into savagery in their efforts to enforce equality. And yet, after it all, France had become a republic with institutions little different from those of other countries, with a social system much the same. France was also an empire - and, the paper claimed, might as well have been governed by royalty.

'*An Phoblacht*' went on to point out that Russia too had overthrown royalty in much the same fashion. There, a new social system had been enforced - suitable, perhaps, in some respects for Russia, but wholly unsuitable for Ireland. The paper also claimed that many had condemned "Russian Communism," not because it was proper communism in its purest sense, but because it carried features alien to Christian civilisation. For Ireland, therefore, the paper argued, there had to be a plan for the future: a social system built upon Christian principles, with the betterment of the people as its primary aim. Freedom, it maintained, if it was to mean anything once achieved, had to be coupled with such a plan.

The article asserted that Republicans in Ireland too often wandered like a soul in search of God - uncertain, restless, shifting from one idea to another without clarity. But, it claimed, if they sought enlightenment in the proper place, they would find it in a deep study of Ireland's ancient social system. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' that old order in Ireland had been exceptionally good - indeed, the only one truly suited to the Irish people. It had taken the foreigner centuries to destroy it, and in its destruction England had

done Ireland her greatest wrong. A revised form of that ancient system, adapted to modern needs, would, the paper argued, restore peace and happiness to the people.

'*An Phoblacht*' insisted that Ireland's ancient aristocratic order had been the most democratic system the world had ever known. The kings, chiefs, and princes of Ireland had been derived from the people themselves - leaders and trustees, not oppressors. The land of the nation had belonged to the people collectively; no individual could claim it solely as his own. Thus, the paper maintained, democracy had been the rule in Ireland before foreign thinkers had even conceived of such an idea. Given this heritage, '*An Phoblacht*' claimed, the labels of Republic, Kingdom, or even Empire mattered little, so long as Ireland achieved freedom and developed her own national social system on modern lines. Internationalism, it concluded, was alien and unsuitable for Ireland. To succeed and to be happy after freedom was won, '*An Phoblacht*' argued that Ireland's task was simple: to be Irish - as Irish as her ancestors had supposedly been.[180]

In April 1934, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the reception accorded to the Tralee prisoners was described as most enthusiastic, large crowds having assembled to demonstrate their appreciation, and bonfires were lit. At Clash Cross, outside Tralee, I.R.A. contingents, uniformed Fianna, the Transport Workers' Union Band, torch bearers and a large body of the general public were drawn up to await the prisoners' arrival. On their appearance they were accorded a hearty welcome and were placed at the centre of a lengthy procession, which made its way through Boherbee, Upper Castle Street, Edward Street, Rock Street, Strand Street, Rae Street, Chapel Street, Bridge Street and the Mall to Denny Street, where a large gathering had assembled. Along the route tar barrels and bonfires were kept blazing, and at several points the prisoners were the recipients of prolonged ovations. In Denny Street a further demonstration of welcome took place, and as the prisoners mounted the

[180] *An Phoblacht 25/11/1933*

platform they were greeted with loud and sustained applause. Mr. Tim Savage, Chairman of the Tralee Prisoners' Defence Committee, occupied the chair and, in opening the proceedings, extended a cordial welcome to the prisoners. He declared that by their action they had won a lasting place in the hearts of true Republicans.

Mr. Savage went on to state that he wished to express the thanks of the Committee to the great majority of workers who had shown the courage and determination necessary to take whatever action was required to secure the prisoners' release. He expressed regret that a section of the workers appeared willing to allow the sentences to pass without protest. He maintained that the Republican movement stood four-square behind every decent worker, and asserted that it was the duty of workers to do all in their power to help achieve the great objective for which Pearse, Connolly and the other leaders of 1916 had laid down their lives.

Mr. Con O'Connor, who was next heard, stated that he welcomed the opportunity of seeing the people of Tralee give the lie to those who had branded the men as criminals the previous December. He asserted that the demonstration held in Tralee the previous October against the would-be Hitler of Ireland had not been an organised affair, but had arisen spontaneously from the people as a whole in opposition to a man working towards dictatorship. Referring to the work of the Tralee Prisoners' Defence Committee, Mr. O'Connor declared that in demanding the prisoners' release they had secured the support of at least 75 per cent of the people of Tralee, irrespective of party allegiance. This, he contended, was because Seán Ryan and his comrades represented a movement in direct continuity with that of Pearse and Connolly, who in 1916 outside the G.P.O. proclaimed a Republic for no class or creed, but for the whole people of Ireland.

As the paper reported, the speakers emphasised that the prisoners were present because they stood for a united and free Irish Workers' Republic, and it was strongly asserted that

words alone would achieve nothing for any party or nation, while it was action that ultimately counted.

'*An Phoblacht*' also reported that a representative meeting of Republican/IRA affiliated workers was held in the Liberal Club, Tralee, with Mr. C. Connor occupying the chair. At the meeting it was decided to establish a Republican Labour Party in Kerry. In outlining the basis of the new organisation, it was stated that the policy of the Party would be founded upon the ideals and principles of James Connolly, and would seek to include all those whose conception of freedom was identical with Connolly's own. An Organising Committee was appointed, and the members were entrusted with the responsibility of speaking for and actively promoting the Party throughout the county. Mr. Tim Savage was appointed official organiser. It was agreed that any statements issued to the Press should make clear that the Party had not been formed as the outcome of any ancient or recent Republican controversies (in reference to the Republican Congress faction splitting from the IRA leadership), nor did it owe allegiance to any existing political party. Rather, it was asserted that its loyalty was directed to the ideals which had inspired its formation, to the workers who would constitute its membership, and to the Government of the Republic, which the meeting expressed the hope would shortly come into operation, and to the establishment of which the Party was dedicated.[181]

An editorial in the '*Irish Workers' Voice*' during November 1934 highlighted the connection between the national independence movement and the struggle to establish a Workers' and Farmers' Republic, drawing on a talk by leading IRA activist, Sean Murray, at Connolly House, Dublin. Murray argued that the class struggles in Ireland, in their political form, centred on the question of enslavement within the British Empire, or freedom outside it. He noted that the representatives of monopoly capital, such as Craigavon and Cosgrave, openly supported the Empire, while the workers supposedly demanded an exit from the

[181] *An Phoblacht 29/4/1934*

Empire, and the establishment of the "dictatorship" of the working class.[182] Sean Murray, co-founder of the second Communist Party of Ireland, had also previously served as a delegate to the IRA Convention of 1922, where he first met Peadar O'Donnell, a future close friend and confidante.[183]

In April 1935, the '*Irish Press*' reported that at the Scottish Trades Union Congress, held in Montrose, delegates had passed a fresh resolution of protest against the British Government's policy of allowing military service bands to perform at civilian events, often for low fees that created unfair competition with trained civilian musicians. During the proceedings, Mr. R. Morrow of Belfast, representing the Irish Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.), delivered greetings from Ireland and addressed the gathering on matters of labour and political solidarity. Mr. Morrow stated that the Blueshirt movement in Ireland - described as openly Fascist - had supposedly been defeated through the combined efforts of Irish trade unionists. According to him, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) had by then become a disciplined Socialist force, committed to defending the interests of Irish workers rather than reactionary politics. At the close of the congress, Mr. Morrow was presented with a copy of Robert Burns's poems as a token of appreciation for his contribution on behalf of the Irish labour movement.[184]

In April 1937, '*Labour News*' reported that the essentials of a Workers' Republic (under the title 'Workers' Republic and the Essentials of Food, Clothing and Shelter') as different people viewed them, were described at the Bakery Trades' Union Social Club, Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin City centre, when Mr. Aodh de Blacam (Roddy the Rover) lectured on this topic, and an audience discussed the aims. The Workers' Republic, according to Mr. de Blacam, involved three principles:

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[182] *Irish Workers' Voice 17/11/1934*

[183] *'Labour Lives No.5 - Sean Murray.' Irish Labour History Society*

[184] *Irish Press 27/4/1935*

- Sacredness of the family,
- Distribution of property,
- Just price.

No Republican, he insisted, could support a Workers' Republic which included these, he argued; and none could rightly support one which did not. The Republic that included them, he further claimed, could not be Communist or Socialist. He suggested that Socialism did not respect the family or private property. De Blacam inveighed particularly against collectivism, as opposed to distribution. The example of Portugal was quoted by him as exemplifying a State conforming to the three principles mentioned. England, he said, had the most undemocratic country in Europe, a government of the few (6 per cent controlling the wealth and the other 94 per cent producing it). France, he claimed, was the clearest democratic country in the world, having 54 per cent of the people with an interest in industry. The Irish Free State could not claim to secure that workers could have a share in the wealth they produced, together with the land. Increased wages did not increase the happiness of the worker if prices correspondingly rose. In order to complete the development of a true Irish democracy, he asserted that property must be widely distributed in industry as well as in land.

The Irish Labour Party, he claimed, ought to set the Pope's most recent Encyclical Letter on the social question as its guide, and disassociate itself from class warfare. He believed that Fascism was not a good thing, but it was 100 times better than full-blown Communism. By developing a Christian Workers' State, Ireland could defeat Communism without resorting to Fascism.

Another guest speaker was the well-known Irish Republican, Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington. She declared that when James Connolly spoke of a Workers' Republic, he meant a Republic where workers had complete control of the machinery of society, and could thus not see any clash with Christianity in that regard. She could not perceive any good coming out of the Fascist system in Europe, and couldn't picture the

workers in such regimes as being free. She asserted that James Connolly always maintained that the Workers' Republic would be no place for parasites or rulers, and that the lecturer's ideas regarding share of ownership could be better addressed to bankers and the Chamber of Commerce, rather than an audience of workers, and similarly his criticisms regarding class-war.

Seamus O'Brien, also present, said that the followers of James Connolly accepted his idea of the Workers' Republic that the purpose of the State should be to provide food, clothing and shelter for all the people within the nation. De Blacam had said that the present Government (led by Fianna Fáil) was being a Christian Government progressing towards a Workers' Republic. He remarked that they had no evidence of that, but could see the 100,000 unemployed people almost forgotten, while the incumbent Government provide bankers, industrialists and merchants with various sorts of concessions and subsidies from the surplus which had arisen out of the previous year's budget. He further remarked that it seemed peculiar to him that de Blacam had suggested for a Workers' Republic that the unemployed were entirely omitted from the scheme.

He asserted that James Connolly's Irish Republic was based on the family unit and on a community that should take care of all the members within itself, the weakest as well as the strongest. As the family should take care of its members, so should the nation, the weakest as well as the strongest.

Describing himself as both a Socialist and a Roman Catholic, Seamus O'Kelly reminded de Blacam of his book '*Towards the Republic*' which he said, had converted him to Socialism, and which gave some praise of note to James Connolly. Subsequently, De Blacam had praised Franco in Spain for his declaration that he would bring back a State system with no room for "idlers." It did not matter what Franco said; what mattered most was what Franco actually did, which was entirely the reverse of that declaration. It was almost blasphemy, he believed, to place Franco and Connolly in the same category. Rev. Fr. Coyne, S.J., declared that the Church

had always been against capitalism. He himself viewed the State as being bound to provide food, clothing and shelter for the people, but he would go further than some theologians and would be prepared to guarantee also freedom, leisure and security.

The chairman, Mr. John Swift, asked whether in view of the many statements made on behalf of the Catholic Church or by leaders of the Church, the Workers' Republic could not be supported by a Catholic. He asked if Fr. Coyne would give reasons to that approach. In response, Rev. Fr. Coyne said he preferred to deal with the subject in a later lecture. The Chairman, continuing, said that as a Socialist, he could support a Workers' Republic that enshrined the three principles mentioned by the lecturer - the sacredness of the family, the distribution of property, and the just price. A State without the family basis, he believed, was inconceivable, although it might be destroyed by such organs of capitalist-psychology as the '*Irish Independent*' and the '*Irish Catholic*' that any departure from the prevailing system would somehow mean a departure from family basis of life.

Mr. Swift went on to suggest that one had only to consider that the family was an innate constituent of society itself to realise how absurd such a contention was. With regard to distributism being in opposition to collectivism, he suggested that if properly examined, it would be found to be identical, because if by some means property and production were to be distributed among those operating and producing that would result in collective ownership.

For example, Swift suggested, that if a bakehouse plant's ownership were distributed among operatives, the operatives would be collective owners. Therefore to hold the two principles in mutual opposition had nothing whatever to justify it. The conventional newspapers had also pronounced that adherence to the Workers' Republic would result in class-warfare. However, he also clarified that they weren't considering a Workers' Republic in the narrow, "proletarian" sense, which those major opinion newspapers had endeavoured to promote. What Swift instead referred to was

a Workers' Republic organised in a broad, comprehensive sense, meaning that anyone providing useful service to the community at large, be they professional, mental or manual workers, they would be component parts of that Republic.

Therefore, Swift asserted, the Workers' Republic eliminated only the "parasitical element" that "manipulated finance and that did not perform any functional activity in the process of production." The joint-stock company and those who operated it may be taken as the only class that would be eliminated from such a system. He believed that:

> "*Class-war on such parasites was surely not inconsistent with parasites or any reasonable teaching*."

Hence, Swift added, the Socialist conception of the Workers' Republic incorporated the three principles elucidated by de Blacam, particularly when the distribution of property referred to collective property. At the end of the meeting, the Rev. Fr. Coyne declared that he entirely agreed with the idea of eliminating the "parasite classes," and believed that he did not personally belong to such a class.[185]

Eamonn Kirwan notes in '*The Threshold of a Newer Movement*' how James Connolly commemorations organised by the Irish Labour Party and IT&GWU often drew large crowds and attracted IRA activists. For example, a James Connolly commemoration held in the market town of Macroom, West Cork (where the champion angler and Labour activist Mr. Dan Quill was also the local organising secretary) attracted a reported 4,000 people. James Connolly commemorations for County Cork had been led by Tim Quill (of the constitutional Labour Party).[186]

Parallels could be seen with republican activity in the USA. In June 1938, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, the renowned

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[185] *Labour News 24/4/1937*

[186] *Kirwan, E (2021). 'The Threshold of a Newer Movement,' Orla Kelly Publishing.*

pacifistic republican and suffragist (described by Maud Gonne MacBride as "the ablest of all the fearless women who worked for Ireland's freedom"[187]), contributed to the '*Workers' Republic*' paper, with a feature called 'Six Months in America.' H. S. Skeffington reflected on her visit to the United States and Canada, focusing on labour politics, political prisoners, and the Irish diaspora. She began by describing visits to imprisoned labour activists like Tom Mooney and J. B. MacNamara, highlighting their long sentences and continued political awareness. Mooney, in particular, remained hopeful for release. A major theme was the shift in the American labour movement. Skeffington observed that it had become far more militant and organised, with increased strikes, picketing, and class consciousness, especially in big cities like New York. Despite ongoing economic hardship during a recession, worker solidarity appeared to be growing. She also examined the role of the Irish in America, noting that many - especially former IRA members - had become active in labour struggles. However, she pointed out that interest in Irish domestic politics had declined, often reduced to symbolic gestures. The article included criticism of Irish attitudes toward international conflicts, particularly the Spanish Civil War, where Skeffington argued that many Irish people unthinkingly supported Franco under religious influence, rather than democratic ideals.[188]

For additional context, it may be worthwhile to highlight that, as per a contemporary feature in '*An Phoblacht*,' Sheehy-Skeffington left Fianna Fáil in 1933 in protest at laws limiting women's right to employment. Alongside other republican women, she later resisted additional curbs on women's rights proposed in the 1937 Constitution. Skeffington maintained that such views drew on a "fascist model" that would confine women to a position of lasting

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[187] *Ward, M (2019). 'The ablest of all the fearless women who worked for Ireland's freedom' The Journal https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/margaret-ward-hanna-sheehy-skeffington-4905875-Dec2019/*

[188] *The Workers' Republic 1/6/1938*

inferiority.[189] Born in the town of Kanturk, Co. Cork, she was the daughter of David Sheehy, a mill-owner and nationalist MP. Hanna was greatly influenced by the thought of James Connolly, and later served as director of organisation for Sinn Féin. In August 1930, she had travelled as a representative of the Friends of Soviet Russia to examine how the Soviet government operated. Like many people of her ilk at the time, she continued to be an engaged sympathiser of the communist system. She wrote for '*An Phoblacht*' and later served as assistant editor of that paper and of its successor, '*Republican File*.' Sheehy-Skeffington was at one stage vice-president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.[190]

A September 1938 feature, published in the '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*,' offered a critical commentary on claims of prosperity in the Twenty-Six Counties. It argued that the end of the tourist season exposed the hollowness of official boasts promoted to visiting Americans and others, who were encouraged to believe that Éire was enjoying unprecedented prosperity following pay increases for Cabinet ministers. The article maintained that these visitors departed unaware of the reality faced by Irish workers, particularly the plight of two thousand railway workers who, it stated, had been reduced to starvation wages and insecure conditions after being placed on half-time work with no guarantee of continued employment. The feature contended that such conditions starkly contradicted the principles claimed by the government, especially given that only a year earlier it had introduced a Constitution presented as supposedly being grounded in the social teachings of the Papal Encyclicals (which the paper referred to as "sound principles"). This apparent contradiction was cited as evidence of a political

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[189] Meehan-Speed, M (2018). 'Forging a Republic of Equals through Feminist Struggle,' An Phoblacht https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/27536

[190] Luddy, M (2018). 'Hanna Sheehy Skeffington: Sinn Féin politician who embraced militant activism.' Irish Times https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/hanna-sheehy-skeffington-sinn-fein-politician-who-embraced-militant-activism-1.3718662

sham and hypocrisy by the de Valera administration. The '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' concluded by questioning whether senior officials of the Great Southern Railways had been subjected to the same reductions in hours and pay, implicitly highlighting inequality and injustice within the system.[191]

In March 1939, the '*Republican Review*' reported that the workers of Clare, through the Kilrush branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, unanimously condemned the proposed Treason Act introduced by the Government of Éire. They expressed their appreciation to Labour representatives in Dáil Éireann for opposing what they regarded as unnecessary and unjustified coercive legislation. The resolution called on Labour to encourage the Irish Trade Union Congress to organise united action by the Irish working-class against the Act, which they viewed as a continuation of British imperial influence. The workers believed that enforcement of such legislation by an Irish government would provide justification for the continued imprisonment of Irish men and women in English and Northern Irish jails and would further encourage arrests of those striving to achieve the ideals of Irish independence for which many had sacrificed their lives.[192]

An article, published as a commentary by the '*Irish Workers' Weekly*' in May 1940, examined the plight of working farmers and was written in response to the findings of a Census of Occupations issued by the "Twenty-Six County Government." The paper argued that the census figures undermined hopes for a broadly prosperous capitalist development in Ireland based on the widespread ownership of property, instead showing that the population was becoming increasingly propertyless. Drawing on Marxist analysis, the article maintained that capitalist development in agriculture was clearly visible in Ireland. It noted that between 1926 and 1936 the number of farmers and assisting relatives working directly on the land fell by over 28,000, a

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[191] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 10/9/1938*

[192] *Republican Review 8/3/1939*

decline concentrated almost entirely among small farms under 30 acres. According to the commentary, farms of between one and 15 acres lost more than 25,000 people, while those between 15 and 30 acres lost almost 8,000, amounting to a total decline of over 33,000 on small holdings. In contrast, larger farms experienced growth, with increases in those working on farms between 30 and 200 acres. The '*Irish Workers' Weekly*' argued that claims in the capitalist press about a general "flight from the land" were misleading, as it was small farmers who were being forced off, while larger farmers expanded at their expense. The article also highlighted a significant decline in women working on farms and noted that nearly 10,000 small farmers, along with around 20,000 of their relatives, were driven off the land during this period. The commentary further observed that although the number of agricultural labourers increased, mechanisation and speed-up in agriculture reduced the need for labour. It criticised the policies of both the Cosgrave and de Valera governments, arguing that state support had favoured stronger farmers and facilitated the absorption of small holdings. The Irish Workers' Weekly concluded that the capitalist property system was destroying the small farmer, forcing him into wage labour, urban migration, or emigration. It argued that only a socialist reorganisation of agriculture - through nationalisation under workers' control and the breaking of monopolies and middlemen - could preserve small farmers on the land and unite them with urban workers in a common struggle.

Adjacent to this article was a memorial to those executed in the 1916 Easter Rising, on the 24th anniversary of the event.[193]

[193] *Irish Workers' Weekly 4/5/1940*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

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LEMASS TO BREAK STRIKE WEAPON

Leaning Towards Fascist Legislation

A COURT OF 'ARBITRATION'

IT was rumoured last week that if the Ministry for Industry and Commerce gets its way there will be fewer strikes in the Twenty-Six Counties in future. Feelers have been thrown out regarding the attitude of the workers towards legislation under which the parties to a trade dispute would be required to submit their grievances to a Court of Arbitration, the decision of which would be legally binding upon both sides.

If there is any truth in this it is evident that Mr. Lemass is not adverse to a little bit of Fascist legislation for the purpose of seeing the profits of these patriotic souls who have started factories in our midst and who suffer so badly as a result of labour trouble.

But it might first occur to Mr. Lemass that a better way of preventing strikes would be to see that his new factories' owners gave up sweating their workers and paid a living wage voluntarily and not only after they had been forced by the strike weapon to do so.

Admittedly, the strike weapon is not an ideal one. Very often it brings more suffering upon the workers than upon the employers, but, nevertheless, it is the most valuable means of protest that the wage-earners have secured and it must not be surrendered for any shadow.

The Irish common know what arbitration means. The railway shopmen also have experience of it, other railway grades have suffered through Wages Boards. All have had a common experience—arbitration means an employers' court making things easy for the employers.

No law and no government must be allowed to take away the strike weapon and put an arbitration court in its place.

ERNE SOAP WORKERS GAIN PART VICTORY

AFTER a three weeks' strike the workers employed by the Erne Soap Works, Dublin, have agreed to return to work on the understanding that the present agreement between the firm and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union is to be redrafted.

A month's notice terminating this agreement has been given by the Union. The reason for this is that Messrs. Dixon & Co., the factory owners, have now two lines of business—the manufacture of soap and candles and the manufacture of soda. The agreement at present in existence was drawn up to cover the former only.

When it suits Messrs. Dixon they claim that the soda end of the business is carried on by a separate company although housed in the same factory and apparently under the same management.

During a recent strike an effort was made to get the soda workers in to work by means of this argument and although this move did not succeed the whole position has been rendered unsatisfactory from the trade union point of view by reason of the extension of the business to cover a new line.

The management usually succeeds in steering trouble half-way and the making of this new agreement is likely to cause plenty of excitement, but in the meantime the workers have gained at least a temporary victory and the firm has taught once more that strikes can only be settled by giving the workers justice.

SCARE APPEAL FOR R.A.F.

AN organisation known as the "Hands off British Air Defence League" are sending out circulars to people in this country making a scare appeal for funds to assist propaganda towards a bigger air defence for Britain.

Commander O. Locker Lampson is chairman of the League. The pamphlet reveals the fear of the Jingo British element of Germany. We give the following quotations from the pamphlet:

"To-day what matters most is mastery of the air. We have lost that mastery. The latest battleship cost £8,000,000. The bigger the ship, the bigger the target. The great German ship Ostfriesland, thought to be unsinkable, was sunk in six seconds by a bomb from the air. In the war no single ship escorted by aircraft was sunk by submarine. Mr. Baldwin says: 'The bomber will get through any defence yet known visualise to-day.' Sir Philip Sassoon says: 'There is no effective defence against air attack.' Remember—no single German aeroplane, which dropped bombs over London, was shot down in the War. Recollect: that the biggest bomb dropped on London during the War weighed only 300 lb. and killed 15 people.

"**Our main aircraft are clustered round London and our oil depots along the Southern coast.**"

Firing Shots In Cashel Street

The Difference Between Three and Six Months

(1) **Staff-Lieut. Tom Lynch,** Irish Republican Army, **was sentenced by the Military Tribunal to six months' imprisonment for possession of three rounds of ammunition.**

(2) **John Quinlan, Blueshirt,** who sentenced to three months' imprisonment at Cashel District Court, for **possession of one .45 revolver, three rounds of .45 ammunition and for discharging it** on the 1st in Cashel street. The judge's remarks were: "I think it was a scandalous thing to pull a gun and discharge it in the town on that night."

MENTAL!

Mr. Darcey, solicitor, defending Quinlan, gave as an excuse that politics had run away with the people's minds. He probably meant that Quinlan was slightly mental. All Blueshirts who offend against the peace are slightly mental—when hauled up before the courts. Another excuse was that the clergy had appealed to the people since the shot had been fired. Anyway, as the press report said, "the Justice ruled as stated."

ATTEMPTED——?

In the report of the case Sergt. Hassett said that when chasing the Blueshirt the latter pulled the trigger of the revolver. When the sergeant examined the revolver he discovered one spent bullet, three live bullets and one "capped," struck but not discharged. What is the inference if the capped bullet was that which was struck when the Blueshirt turned on the sergeant? Answer—6 months.

Hitler's 77

"I was the supreme justice in Germany. I ordered them to be shot," declared Hitler in the German Reichstag in his statement regarding the killing of seventy-seven "treasonable" comrades of his. The bombast of Hitler is scarcely likely to reassure the people of Germany who are suffering the effects of his rule.

Hitler is afraid when he stoops to explain and with good reason. Reports from Germany, reaching us despite the Censorship, indicate that the whole Nazi organisation has become disaffected and will not give unquestioning obedience to the blood-stained dictator. The precautions taken when Hitler appeared in the Reichstag are eloquent testimony of the fear which is felt in official circles.

SOMAX STRIKERS NEED FUNDS TO CARRY ON

Workers Must Not Lose

An appeal by the Strike Committee for Funds for the relief and support of the Strikers, their wives, children and dependents.

Upwards of 100 workers (men, women and girls) employed by Messrs. S. O. McCabe (trading as "Somax"), shirt manufacturers, South Great George's street, Dublin, have been forced out on strike by the decision of Dublin to tread wearily on the picket line, day after day, for the past fortnight. **The strike to secure simple justice for a fellow-worker, victimised for asking to be paid his legal Trade Board rate of 30/- instead of 26/- per week, and against the action of McCabe when nearly £50 back pay on this basis is due. Mr. McCabe of Belfast, the proprietor of the concern, has:**

1. Refused to hear the worker concerned, or even to consider his case, and has victimised him because he had joined the workers' union by giving notice of dismissal.
2. Refused to hear, negotiate with recognise the Union or even to acknowledge correspondence in connection with the case.
3. Refused to meet the responsible officials of the union of some 100 Dublin citizens by failure to attend personally at his Dublin office or to personally meet the Union representatives.
4. Forces his Dublin manager to shelter him and to act as Strike-breaking agent.
5. Has failed to respond to approaches made by the Dublin Trades Union Council and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce with a view to settling the dispute.

This is a challenge to Trade Unionism and to the workers generally. It must be met. We cannot allow our workers to be freed back by economic pressure, to be at the mercy of employers who refuse even to accept irreducible minimum wage and working conditions. We, the undersigned, on behalf of the Strike Committee, confidently look to you, and appeal to all Trade Unionists, to all workers and sympathisers for generous financial support for the Somax strikers.

Whatever is collected will be in the same being even threatened with eviction from their homes. The Irish Garment Makers' Industrial Union is giving every possible help—but most of us, as new members, are not in a position to do so. We look to you and on the Union's members to do more than is being done. We have the backing of the Dublin Trades Union Council in the fight, it remains but for you and your workmates, your Trades Union Branch, or other organisation to respond to the appeal, remember, prompt response is essential.

For and on behalf of the Somax Strike Committee,

(Signed)
Liam Campbell, Chairman;
Patrick Hoey, Secretary.
Richard Stapleton, Hon. Sec.;
44 Parnell Square.

CAPITALISM COLLAPSES IN SAN FRANCISCO

War to the Death

San Francisco, strongest Trade Union City in the United States, is in the throes of a terrific struggle the result of which will determine whether the workers in the Golden Gate City will preserve their dearly-won rights or whether Californian bourdom will be in a position of undisputed control.

The dispute which now has brought the City's entire industrial ranks from work originated in the demand of the longshoremen (dockers) for control of the "hiring halls."

For some time past corrupt foremen have been allocating all the work to a small group of favourites, with the result that thousands of dockers are kept permanently out of work. This demand has been denied, and organised San Francisco labour has downed tools in sympathy.

Despite Mr. Roosevelt's alleged desire for a fair deal for all, the armed forces of the U.S. Government are being thrown into the struggle on the side of the bosses.

This is done on the usual plea of maintaining order, but which really means the maintaining of the employers' privileges now threatened by the workers.

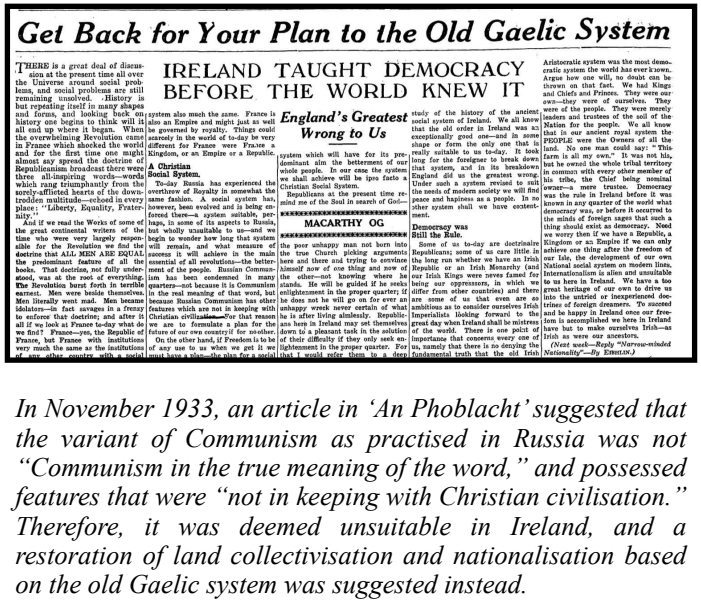
Another instance of the hypocrisy of Roosevelt's N.R.A. scheme is to be found in the fact that the headquarters of the N.R.A. in Washington are at the moment being picketed by strikers who have come out because

the N.R.A. refuses to give employees the right to become Trade Unionists, although the N.R.A. Constitution recommends that workers in all industries should belong to Trade Unions.

Latest reports from the strike area indicate that loyal co-operation among all classes of workers is striking terror into the hearts of the rich-tater bosses and their allies of the administrative machine. Meanwhile Roosevelt ahirks visiting the City and is preaching to a Pacific island while San Francisco blazes up again.

'An Phoblacht' focused on promoting workers' strikes, attacking capitalism, and accused Fianna Fáil of creating so-called "fascist" legislation against the interests of factory workers. The paper's header also quotes Connolly.
(Source:An Phoblacht 21/7/1934)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



Get Back for Your Plan to the Old Gaelic System

IRELAND TAUGHT DEMOCRACY BEFORE THE WORLD KNEW IT

THERE is a great deal of discussion at the present time all over the Universe around social problems, and social problems are still remaining unsolved. History is but repeating itself in many shapes and forms, and looking back on history one begins to think will it all end up where it began. When the overwhelming Revolution came in France which shocked the world and for the first time one might almost say spread the doctrine of Republicanism broadcast there were three all-inspiring words—words which rang triumphantly from the sorely-afflicted hearts of the down-trodden multitude—echoed in every place: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

And if we read the Works of some of the great continental writers of the time who were very largely responsible for the Revolution we find the doctrine that ALL MEN ARE EQUAL the predominant feature of all the books. That doctrine, not fully understood, was at the root of everything. The Revolution burst forth in terrible earnest. Men were beside themselves. Men literally went mad. Men became idolators—in fact savages in a frenzy to enforce that doctrine; and after it all if we look at France to-day what do we find? France—yes, the Republic of France, but France with institutions very much the same as the institutions of our other country with a social system also much the same. France is also an Empire and might just as well be governed by royalty. Things could scarcely in the world of to-day be very different for France were France a Kingdom, or an Empire or a Republic.

A Christian Social System.

To-day Russia has experienced the overthrow of Royalty in somewhat the same fashion. A social system has, however, been evolved and is being enforced there—a system suitable, perhaps, in some of its aspects to Russia, but wholly unsuitable to us—and we begin to wonder how long that system will remain, and what measure of success it will achieve in the main essential of all revolutions—the betterment of the people. Russian Communism has been condemned in many quarters—not because it is Communism in the real meaning of that word, but because Russian Communism has other features which are not in keeping with Christian civilisation. For that reason we are to formulate a plan for the future of our own country if for no other.

On the other hand, if Freedom is to be of any use to us when we get it we must have a plan—the plan for a social system which will have for its predominant aim the betterment of our whole people. In our case the system we shall achieve will be ipso facto a Christian Social System.

Republicans at the present time remind me of the Soul in search of God—

England's Greatest Wrong to Us

MACARTHY OG

the poor unhappy man not born into the true Church picking arguments here and there and trying to convince himself now of one thing and now of the other—not knowing where he stands. He will be guided if he seeks enlightenment in the proper quarter; if he does not he will go on for ever an unhappy wreck never certain of what he is after living aimlessly. Republicans here in Ireland may set themselves down to a pleasant task in the solution of their difficulty if they only seek enlightenment in the proper quarter. For that I would refer them to a deep study of the history of the ancient social system of Ireland. We all know that the old order in Ireland was an exceptionally good one—and in some shape or form the only one that is really suitable to us to-day. It took long for the foreigner to break down that system, and in its breakdown England did us the greatest wrong. Under such a system revised to suit the needs of modern society we will find peace and hapiness as a people. In no other system shall we have contentment.

Democracy was Still the Rule.

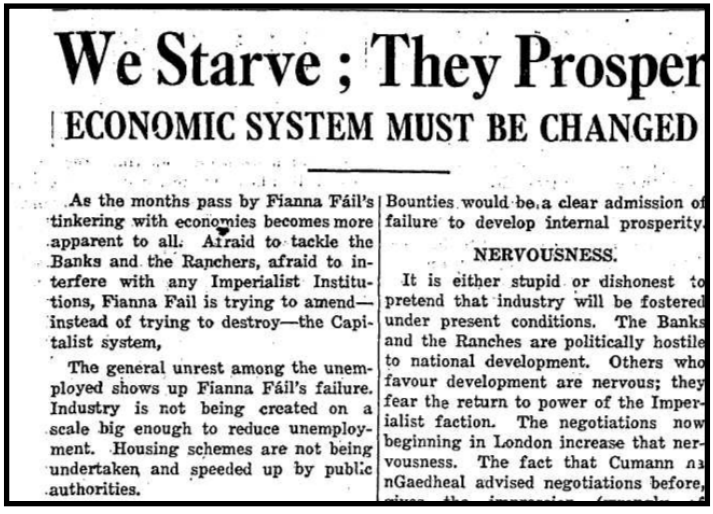
Some of us to-day are doctrinaire Republicans; some of us care little in the long run whether we have an Irish Republic or an Irish Monarchy (and our Irish Kings were never famed for being our oppressors, in which we differ from other countries) and there are some of us that even are so ambitious as to consider ourselves Irish Imperialists looking forward to the great day when Ireland shall be mistress of the world. There is one point of importance that concerns every one of us, namely that there is no denying the fundamental truth that the old Irish Aristocratic system was the most democratic system the world has ever known. Argue how one will, no doubt can be thrown on that fact. We had Kings and Chiefs and Princes. They were our own—they were of ourselves. They were of the people. They were merely leaders and trustees of the soil of the Nation for the people. We all know that in our ancient royal system the PEOPLE were the Owners of all the land. No one man could say: "This farm is all my own." It was not his, but he owned the whole tribal territory in common with every other member of his tribe, the Chief being nominal owner—a mere trustee. Democracy was the rule in Ireland before it was known in any quarter of the world what democracy was, or before it occurred to the minds of foreign sages that such a thing should exist as democracy. Need we worry then if we have a Republic, a Kingdom or an Empire if we can only achieve one thing after the freedom of our Isle, the development of our own National social system on modern lines, Internationalism is alien and unsuitable to us here in Ireland. We have a too great heritage of our own to drive us into the untried or inexperienced doctrines of foreign dreamers. To succeed and be happy in Ireland once our freedom is accomplished we here in Ireland have but to make ourselves Irish—as Irish as were our ancestors.

(Next week—Reply "Narrow-minded Nationality"—By EMETUR.)

In November 1933, an article in 'An Phoblacht' suggested that the variant of Communism as practised in Russia was not "Communism in the true meaning of the word," and possessed features that were "not in keeping with Christian civilisation." Therefore, it was deemed unsuitable in Ireland, and a restoration of land collectivisation and nationalisation based on the old Gaelic system was suggested instead.
(Source: An Phoblacht 25/11/1933)

CROMWELLIAN
CODE
GROUND RENTS

'An Phoblacht' promoted the idea that "land nationalisation is a necessity" and supported the call of some Dublin trades unionists to eliminate historic property grounds rents attached to the aristocracy, instead suggesting a nominal ground rent be paid to the State or city municipality.
(Source: An Phoblacht 15/10/1932)



We Starve ; They Prosper

ECONOMIC SYSTEM MUST BE CHANGED

As the months pass by Fianna Fáil's tinkering with economies becomes more apparent to all. Afraid to tackle the Banks and the Ranchers, afraid to interfere with any Imperialist Institutions, Fianna Fail is trying to amend—instead of trying to destroy—the Capitalist system,

The general unrest among the unemployed shows up Fianna Fáil's failure. Industry is not being created on a scale big enough to reduce unemployment. Housing schemes are not being undertaken and speeded up by public authorities.

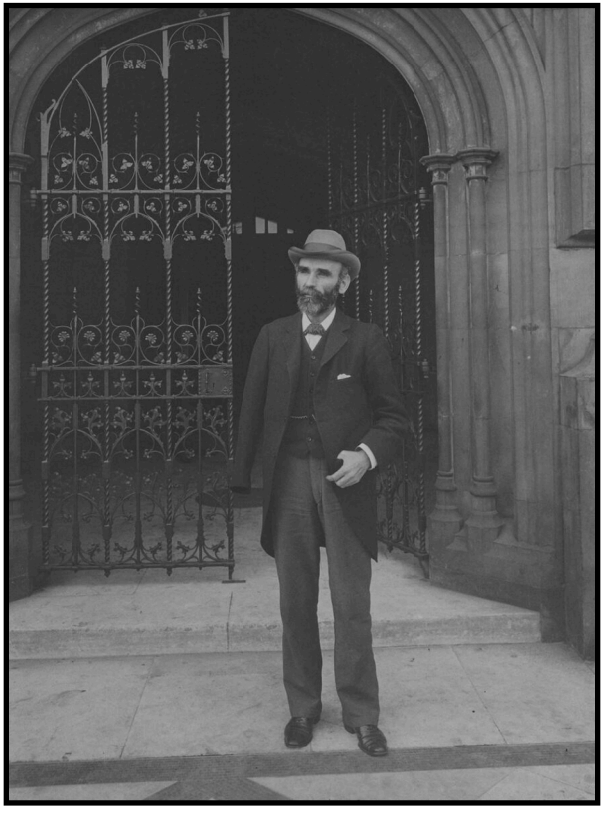
Bounties would be a clear admission of failure to develop internal prosperity.

NERVOUSNESS.

It is either stupid or dishonest to pretend that industry will be fostered under present conditions. The Banks and the Ranches are politically hostile to national development. Others who favour development are nervous; they fear the return to power of the Imperialist faction. The negotiations now beginning in London increase that nervousness. The fact that Cumann na nGaedheal advised negotiations before,

The IRA's 'An Phoblacht' called for State control of credit and the break-up of "ranches."
(Source: An Phoblacht 15/10/1932)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



In 1932, the 'Republican File' promoted the views of the 19th century Irish Nationalist Leader, Michael Davitt MP, who called for land nationalisation and the abolition of private property all together.
(Source: National Portrait Gallery UK)

CEMBER 31, 1927.

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS THE CONCERN OF ALL"

Groups interested in the rousing of the working farmers to secure National repudiation of the "Ultimate Financial Settlement" between Partitioned Ireland and Great Britain are asked to get in touch with this office.

Speakers will be sent to meetings or lectures if timely notice is given.

A front-page announcement directed at working farmers in an edition of 'An Phoblacht' from December 1927.
(Source: An Phoblacht 31/12/1927)

Call off the Bailiffs !
Down with Landlordism!

A Public Meeting
will be held in
TRALEE
at 1 p.m., on
Sunday, November 1, 1930,
When members of the
National Committee
Irish Working Farmers
will make the case against Land Annuities and Forced Sales.

Representatives of Committees of Action in Kerry, Tipperary and Limerick will hold an Organising Conference after the meeting.

Individuals and groups wishing to attend are asked to write Ml. P. Hallissey, Gortalea, Mastergeehy, Killarney.

"' We owe them no tribute, and even if we did—— "

(Source: An Phoblacht 18/10/1930)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

RKERS WEEKLY

Published by IRISH WORKERS WEEKLY, at 14 Sackville Place, Dublin, and printed by Liberty Press, Ltd. Dublin.

our Connolly

nours the memory of its greatest nnoliy. The great masters of ntunity on this Connolly Day to e when it was never more neces-

ed for is being assailed by the ut his life. Upper-class Ireland in the official and unofficial campa nothing to-day but schemes to of the working-class movement— Press, and now the right to

is marshalled to hold the unem- sistence and beat back every in their puny level of existence. Servants, the hospital attendants employers and the State has been object is to prepare the ground ction of the working people. er the hammer. A try-out of The ground is being traversed for Trade Unins.

array of Ministers and officials gotiating a new trade agreement. policy is to assist the interests the Banks, and the Imperialists. ers, the workless, the Re-

Demonstrations should bring ers in the true spirit of the Con- should go forth from Sunday's ing Class."

clear that the working people of the kind of life planned for them stry and trade and the placemen

Connolly Day should be the as revival and the emergence of a Connolly fought for.

Silences more than most of those to carry the true spirit of Con- ions and the work to follow.

in mind the fight to end the political shackles still hold- ause of Ireland is the cause

Let those who honour the dead ke the cause for which he died land and a free working-class.

nt More Pay

Belfast Municipal Wages

THE Wages Committee of the Belfast Corporation has set itself against the Trade Union movement on the question of wage increases for Corporation employees who are not governed by trade agreements.

The Wages Committee are considering a scheme by which wages would rise or fall at the rate of 1s. per week, according to five point variation in the cost of living. A proposal that the matter be referred to a Joint Industrial Council, including representatives of the Trades Council, was defeated.

This plan by the Corporation

Ten Thousand Small Farmers Driven Off The Land

A CENSUS of Occupations has been issued by the Twenty-Six County Government. The facts herein contained are a cold douche for those who look, or looked, to the growth of a prosperous development of Capitalism in Ireland on the lines of a dispersion of property among greater masses of the people.

The Census shows the people are growing more and more propertyless with every year that passes. In the case of farming the law of Capitalist development as laid down by Marx, is here displayed very clearly. In 1926, the year of the last Census, there were 321,418 persons working directly on the land, made-up of farmers and assisting relatives (excluding agricultural labourers). In 1936 (the figures are only up to 1936) the number had fallen to 303,309, or a fall of over 28,000.

These figures are for the entire field of agriculture, big, middle and small farms. But this doesn't give the true picture of the havoc in the countryside. The farming population did not decline in all sections of farming. **In some it actually rose.** The decline is accounted for oh the small farms under 30 acres.

On farms between one and 15 acres there was a fall of no less than 25,117 persons in the ten years: on farms between 15 and 30 acres the number of people dropped by 7,992. Thus on farms under 30 acres the number of farmers and helpers fell by just over 33,000.

SMALL FARMERS' VICTIMS.

On the bigger farms the position is reversed. On the section between 30 and 50 acres there is an increase of 2,307, and between 50 and 100 acres there is an increase of 2,909. On farms between 100 and 200 acres there is an addition of 1,100 people.

These figures show that while the number of people working for a livelihood on farms under 30 acres fell by over 33,000, the number working on farms between 30 and 200 acres rose by over 6,300. The Capitalist Press is loudly wailing " the flight from the land," but it carefully avoids telling the public that it is the lower rung of the farmers that is being forced to fly and that the bigger farmers are growing at the expense of the smaller farmers.

The number of women fell on all sizes of farms. The total fall among females was 14,202 or 11.9 per cent., the number of males fell by 13,907 or 3.4 per cent.

We here speak of "farmers and assisting relatives "—not of agricultural labourers. Out of the drop of over 28,000 in the first named category the number of farmers turned off the land in these ten years was almost 10,000

people were turned off the land in this period.

Naturally, the number of agricultural labourers has increased, though not in proportion to the "casualties" among the poor farmers. Machinery and speed-up has come to agriculture as well as industry. Less men are wanted now than formerly, in a shorter time.

All the aid given to agriculture by both the Governments of Cosgrave and de Valera, has been to aid the strong farmers to stay on the land and to gobble-up the small fellows holdings. In other words, the small fellow has been aided on the road to become (if lucky) a propertyless labourer or the big fellow's farm or to seek work in the town, or, as in not a few cases, to emigrate.

This is what the property system is doing to the rearguard of the native Irish who hold a bit of property, the poor farmer and his family. The Capitalist property system is devouring him, turning him out as a vagrant on the road. Only the Socialist system of organisation of agriculture can save the man on the land. By nationalising, under workers control the big trusts, smashing the price-fixing rings of the monopolies, the countryman could be supplied by Socialist industry with manufactured articles —a fair exchange for his agricultural produce. At present the farmer and townsman are alike rooked by the thieving activities of the speculators and middlemen of all sorts. The time has come for a fight against the monopolies and middle agencies, bacon, milling and market speculators. In this the small struggling farmer and town worker will find a common ground for united effort.

24th ANNIVERSARY OF THAT WEEK OF EXECUTIONS

Yesterday Friday, May 3, was the 24th anniversary of the first executions of the leaders of the 1916 Uprising. Padraig Pearse, Thomas J. Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh were the first to face the British firing squad. On May 4, Edward Daly, Joseph Plunkett, Michael O Hanrahan and Willie Pearse were shot. On May 5, Major John MacBride. On May 8, Eamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert Michael Mallin and Sean Houston. On May 9, Thomas Kent, at Cobh, Co Cork. Finally, on May 12, James Connolly and Sean Mac Diarmada were shot.

Our pictures are these of Padraig Pearse and Sean Mac Diarmada (top): Thomas MacDonagh and Thomas J. Clarke (second row): and Joseph Plunkett and Eamonn Ceannt.

An article that discusses the plight of the smaller, working farmers sits adjacent to a memorial of the executions of the 1916 Rising.
(Source: Irish Workers' Weekly 4/5/1940)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
SAOR ÉIRE

At the beginning of August 1931, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on several events pertaining to the launch of the IRA's Saor Éire political platform. For example, it reported that on the 18th of July that year, a conference of representatives from various areas in North Kerry was held at Bedford Hall, Listowel, in connection with the launch of Saor Éire. The following districts had sent several delegates: Listowel, Ballylongford, Tarbert, Newtownsandes, Knockanure, Asdee, Ballydonoghue, Ballybunion, Bedford, and Finuge.

Mr. Seán MacBride from Dublin attended and explained the organisation's objectives: (1) to sever the connection with England and secure for the Irish Republic the free exercise of its national sovereignty; (2) to vest all political power within the Republic in the working class and working farmers; (3) to abolish landlordism in land, fisheries, and minerals without compensation; (4) to make the national wealth and credit available for the creation and full development of essential industries and mineral resources through industrial workers' co-operatives under state direction and management, with workers regulating internal working conditions; (5) to develop the agricultural industry through co-operative working farmers and groups of agricultural workers using state credit; (6) to establish a state monopoly in banking and credit; (7) to create a state monopoly in export and import services and promote co-operative distribution; (8) to nationalise all forms of public inland transport to be operated and administered by a body established by the National Economic Council; (9) to make housing a state responsibility for citizens; (10) to guarantee a minimum standard of living for each citizen, both employed and unemployed; (11) to establish a social insurance scheme providing for old age, widows, orphans, and the maintenance of the physically and mentally incapacitated; (12) to abolish all forms of imperial tribute; (13) to restore Gaelic culture, language, and pastimes; (14) to foster close co-operation between agricultural and rural workers and those in cities and towns, encouraging them to recognise their mutual interests as allies

and victims of the same exploitative agencies. After considerable discussion, the meeting unanimously approved these aims. A committee of twelve was appointed to arrange district meetings to select delegates for a public meeting to be held in Dublin in the near future.

In the same issue, it was outlined that extraordinary scenes marked the “Treason" (as dubbed by the publication) trials, held at Listowel Courthouse on 20th July, which lasted from half past noon until 9 p.m., with only one brief adjournment. Soldiers in steel helmets, fully armed, accompanied by armed and uniformed constabulary, searched houses in the town and mounted guard over the police barracks and courthouse. Soldiers with fixed bayonets guarded the prisoners in their cells, and about a dozen soldiers were on duty inside the court itself. Both the court and the street outside were packed with enthusiastic crowds who cheered the four remanded prisoners. Addressing the crowd from the military lorry in which he was being taken away, Mr. Pádraig Ó Ceallacháin declared that Ireland would achieve independence despite bribery, corruption, and naked force. The special court in Listowel, held before Justice D. F. Johnston, D.J., heard charges against Messrs. Pádraig Ó Ceallacháin, O.S.; James Leahy; Joseph Enright; Seán MacBride (Dublin); Eugene Moriarty, O.S.; Thomas Pellican; Bartholomew Joy; and Daniel Dalton. They were accused of involvement with an alleged military organisation and participation in an unlawful assembly. Messrs. Moriarty, Enright, Leahy, and O'Connor were specifically charged with assembling for the purpose of practising military training or drilling without the permission of Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenny. Mr. Ó Ceallacháin was charged with training and drilling an assembly, without State permission. Messrs. MacBride, Ó Ceallacháin, Joy, and Dalton were also accused of personally practising such military exercises, evolutions, and manoeuvres without permission. Mr. J. Liston, of Tralee, prosecuted on behalf of the State.

At the start of the proceedings, Mr. Seán MacBride addressed the Justice, asking whether the court was a civil or military court, commenting that he had never seen soldiers in full

uniform inside a regular court before. Mr. Liston, prosecuting for the State, delivered his speech, which was intermittently met with outbursts and jeers from the prisoners in the dock at appropriate moments. He outlined the charges, stating that the events in question occurred in Coolard. On the night of 18th July, following information received in confidence, Superintendent Dunphy of Listowel proceeded to Coolard, near Listowel. On the way, he observed a number of men, including Mr. MacBride, on the road. He dismounted from his vehicle to interview MacBride. Detective Officer Donovan then proceeded to Ballybunion. On the road, they had encountered approximately twenty men being drilled and undergoing military exercises conducted by Mr. Pádraig Ó Ceallacháin. Several men involved in the drills were identified as those charged. Subsequently, they visited the house where Mr. Seán MacBride BL was staying and conducted a search. They found numerous documents, including the draft constitutional rules of Saor Éire.

Mr. Liston continued, describing this document as significant and stating he wished every thoughtful and responsible man in the country could read it, believing that if it were widely circulated, the organisation would quickly succeed-though the report noted disagreement with his view on the outcome of such circulation. The Justice read a portion of the document aloud, which stated:

> *"Today Dublin Castle they say is no more; but the aliens have not been dispossessed. Landlordism has not been abolished, and landlords have not been made to disgorge... Banks, which are the pooling of money stolen from us, have not come under our control. The machinery of the State today remains exactly as in pre-Treaty days - a tyranny aligned with the interests that impoverished us. The Free Parliament is only an association for carrying out imperial purposes, and just as the individual agent grew waxed in his master's service, so now an organisation of imperial agents prospers on the ruin of their country, squabbling among themselves for the offices. The government offered to the State is*

merely a choice of agents for the class that enslaves us. Good or bad government simply means what the good or bad agent rampant in other days, good men in office no more means the end of slavery any more than a good agent meant the end of landlordism."

Mr. Liston then referred to another passage, which remarked that anyone who joins the institutions of the Irish state is seen as betraying the Irish cause. It claims that real change cannot come from working within the existing system, because the state itself is fundamentally flawed and cannot be reformed from the top down. Instead, it insists that the entire system must be overthrown and replaced with a new one built from the ground up. According to the text, this change should be led by those most affected by the system - particularly the oppressed and economically vulnerable. It highlights groups such as the unemployed, part-time workers, and people living in insecure or exploitative conditions as the driving force behind this transformation. It also includes socially conscious workers who recognise the injustice of a society where people suffer despite overall wealth. Overall, the document presents a radical viewpoint, arguing for the complete dismantling of the existing state and the creation of a new system led by and for the working class.

Continuing, Mr. Liston referred to the rules contained in the Draft Constitutional Rules. Rule 2 stated that all political power was to be vested within the Republic in the working class and working farmers. Rule 4 declared the intention to make the national wealth and credit available for the creation and full development of essential industries and mineral resources through Industrial Workers' Co-operatives under state direction and management, with workers regulating internal working conditions. Mr. Liston then read further from the document, outlining the means by which these objectives were to be achieved: (1) to organise Committees of Action among industrial and agricultural workers to lead the daily struggle of the working class and working farmers against exploitation and to secure revolutionary leadership for their common cause; (2) the mobilisation of the mass of the Irish people behind a revolutionary government aimed at

overthrowing British Imperialism and its allies in Ireland, and establishing a Workers' State. After reading these points, Mr. Liston concluded that anyone who read them would understand that the organisation sought to establish a Bolshevik Republic in Ireland, one that denied, in his view, both God and the rights of man. Upon Mr. Liston's conclusion, Mr. MacBride protested against the use of the proceedings as a platform for a political speech, and challenged him to meet in an open debate in the Square at Listowel on any day. In the same case, MacBride challenged the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Saor Éire was affiliated to any paramilitary organisation in particular. He challenged the Justice to point out the evidence he relied upon to satisfy himself that a prima facie case had been made out.

On the back page of this same '*An Phoblacht*,' issue, there is a column advertising an upcoming meeting of the Friends of the Soviet Union.[194]

A couple of weeks later, it was reported that the preliminary meeting of Saor Éire was held in the Town Hall, Sligo, on Saturday, 15th August. Alderman John Lynch, the Mayor of Sligo, presided over the meeting. Delegates attended from Sligo town, Carrowroe, Coolera, Driffe, Ballintrillick, Cliffoney, Enniscrone, Bunninadden, Bundoran, Taugh, Collooney, and Cashelgaron. Peadar O'Donnell and Seán MacBride explained the Draft Constitution of Saor Éire and its application to local affairs, which led to a very interesting discussion. Reports of threatened evictions were submitted to the meeting, with details to be forwarded for publication. The following provisional officers were elected: Chairman, E. G. Bol (Co. C.); Vice-Chairman, M. M'Gowan, O.S., ex-T.D.; Deputy Vice-Chairman, C. Dolan; and Secretary, Peadar Glynn. It was decided to hold a Convention within three weeks, with the exact date to be announced later. In the meantime, local branches were to discuss the Constitution

[194] *An Phoblacht 1/8/1931*

and bring forward any proposals they wished to submit to the National Convention.[195]

In September, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that in the lead-up to the National Convention to be held in Dublin City, conferences were held in the following counties: Meath, Westmeath, Leitrim, Roscommon, Monaghan, and Cavan. It was outlined that representative meetings of workers and working farmers from the local districts in three counties discussed the objectives of Saor Éire. A common theme across all these conferences was the insistence by members on the necessity of developing a mass movement of workers and working farmers, and securing revolutionary leadership for the struggle against imperialist exploitation. Analyses of local situations were made, and the day-to-day progress of the organisation was discussed in relation to evictions, bank sales, land seizures, wage cuts, and increasing pressure against agricultural and wage-earning workers.

It was the general opinion at the conferences that the situation in the country was ripe-not only for a defensive stand against British Imperialism and its exploiting allies in Ireland, but also for a forward offensive against these forces. Delegates emphasised the necessity for a united front of workers in towns and cities, together with small farmers and rural workers, pointing out that the community of interests among these groups and the common pressure exerted by British Imperialism and its native allies should make them inseparable allies. Organising Committees were formed, and delegates were elected to attend the National Congress. Mr. D. Fitzgerald, Secretary of the Saor Éire Congress Preparatory Committee, located at 44 Parnell Square, Dublin, provided these updates.

Furthermore, the Dublin District Committee met around that time. Delegates from Branches 1, 2, and 4 were present, and applications for membership were submitted and approved. Arrangements were made for branch meetings to elect delegates to the forthcoming National Convention. The

[195] *An Phoblacht 29/8/1931*

Branch Committee later met and scheduled general meetings as follows: Branch No. 1 on Sunday, 6th September 1931; Branch No. 2 on a date to be decided; Branch No. 3 on Friday, 11th September 1931; Branch No. 4 on Tuesday, 8th September 1931; and Branch No. 5's date was to be announced later. Persons interested in forming groups or intending members were requested to communicate with the Dublin District Secretary at 44 Parnell Square.[196]

Mr D. Daly outlined in his opinion piece that, in the face of the supposed hypocrisy and falsehood of those survivors among what he dubbed as the "perjurers" who took on the responsibility of persuading the Irish people to accept the so-called "Free" State, it was important to clarify what Irish Republicans stood for. Certainly, the fight that began in Easter Week, 1916, was not started to secure for twenty-six counties of a partitioned land the dominion status which His Majesty's Ministers in the Dáil Éireann claimed as the highest and best form of freedom for Ireland. Nor would the capitalist "Free" State Constitution, despite what those who deceived the Irish people into accepting it claimed, have satisfied those who signed the Democratic Declaration of Independence and sealed it with their blood. He expressed that the resources and industries of the nation were to be developed for the benefit of the Irish people, and the reconquest of the country by foreign capital was to be guarded against through co-operation. Every individual-whether farmer, trader, or labourer-was to be a co-operative worker. With the whole country thus organised and everyone invested in the progress of national industries, Ireland would cease to be a dumping ground for foreign manufacturers and combines. The education, well-being, and training of children as citizens of a free and Gaelic Ireland would be carefully attended to. The country would be free not only politically but culturally Gaelic as well. The Republic guaranteed social as well as political freedom to the Irish masses. Under the Free State, they possessed not a shadow of the former and only a mockery of the latter. He also asserted that all citizens of the Republic would have equal rights and

[196] *An Phoblacht 5/9/1931*

equal opportunities, and would be entitled to an adequate share of the nation's labour. The people, he claimed, would be the sole owners of the land, and would have unfettered control over it. Poor Law institutions would be abolished, and the aged and infirm would not be regarded as a burden but rather entitled to the nation's gratitude and consideration.

He asserted that the resources and industries of the nation were to be developed for the benefit of the Irish people, and the reconquest of the country by foreign capital was to be guarded against through co-operation. Every individual-whether farmer, trader, or labourer-was to be a co-operative worker. With the whole country thus organised and everyone invested in the progress of national industries, Ireland would cease to be a dumping ground for foreign manufacturers and combines. He concluded by stating that the education, well-being, and training of children as citizens of a free and Gaelic Ireland were to be carefully looked after. The country was to be free not only politically, but Gaelic as well.

Below Daly's piece, the 'Acting-Editor' of '*An Phoblacht*' notes that in the Constitution of Saor Éire, the aims as indicated by the contribution were, in fact, the Irish Republican social and economic programme itself.[197]

The following week, the IRA's print organ outlined that the conferences of workers and working farmers to elect organising committees and delegates to the National Congress continued to be held successfully. Practically the entire country, it claimed, had by this time been covered, including the Six-County area. North Wexford and South Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, Drogheda and its district, Tipperary, and Cork City had their organising committees working and hoped to expand the organisation in their districts. Delegates at the various conferences agreed on the necessity of securing groups of workers and working farmers in every town-land to connect with the district committees in an organisational drive. Members were hopeful that the pressure of conditions-the crisis in agriculture and the rising

[197] *An Phoblacht 5/9/1931*

unemployment in both countryside and towns-would accelerate the gathering of mass support. Already, in many areas, a considerable amount of organisational work had been done. Active committees were expected to quickly extend their influence into every town-land within their parishes and districts. Furthermore, the Dublin District Committee documented that the No. 1 Branch had met on the preceding Sunday. There were 50 members present. After some discussion, it was decided to defer the election of delegates to the meeting to be held on the following Sunday (12th), when it was hoped there would be a much larger attendance. The No. 5 Branch was to hold its General Meeting on Tuesday, 14th September. Branch Secretaries were also requested to inform the delegates to attend the forthcoming District Meeting.

Meanwhile, preparatory conferences of Saor Éire had been arranged in County Kerry as followed:

- Sept. 11: Tralee
- Sept. 12: Killarney
- Sept. 13: Ardfert
- Sept. 14: Castlegregory
- Sept. 15: Cahirsiveen.[198]

On 19 September 1931, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that forty delegates, representing every part of Connemara - including several Road Workers' representatives and a delegate from the Oughterard Fishermen's Union - had attended a Saor Éire Conference at Peacock's Hotel, Maam Cross. Peadar McDonnell presided, Joe Meehan acted as Secretary, and Seán MacBride attended from Headquarters. Mr MacBride introduced the Draft Constitution of Saor Éire. He explained that the organisation served a twofold purpose: first, to fight under the present system to improve the current slave-like conditions of workers and working farmers; and second, to ensure that when a free Republic was established, it would be governed by and in the interests of the working class - not the landlords and capitalists. It was asserted that:

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[198] *An Phoblacht 12/9/1931*

> *"The first thing we must assert is that every human being in this country has a right to an equal share of the nation's wealth, provided they are willing to work."*

The conference held a lengthy discussion on the conditions of employment for road workers in Connemara. It was reported that wages stood at 27 shillings per week, less insurance. Serious complaints were raised against Galway County Council, as workers were often sent home after a couple of hours' work and not paid for the time worked. The rate of pay for breaking stones was noted at 2 shillings and 3 pence per ton. James MacDonagh, delegate from the Oughterard Fishermen's Union, outlined the situation facing Carrib fishermen. It was reported that Colonel Cross, who holds the fishing "rights" to the Galway River, refused access to others unless paid, and that he nets salmon in the river, preventing their natural run into Lough Corrib.

After discussion, the following resolution was also adopted unanimously:

> *"That we agree with the Draft Constitution of Saor Éire and shall send delegates to the forthcoming Congress."*

A Provisional Committee was formed, composed of the following:

- Peadar T. McDonnell
- Ned Naughton
- Conn Ó Flaherty, Camus, Leckar, Carraroe P.O.
- Michael Cosgrove
- Mick Brown, Dooghla, Camus
- Eoghan Ó Neachtain, Spiddal P.O.
- J. Billamore, Oughterard
- Joe M. Mahon, Camas, Costelloe P.O. (Secretary)

It was also decided to send three delegates to the Congress in Dublin:

- Peadar T. McDonnell, Leenane
- Ned Naughton, Oughterard
- Tomás Ó Caora, Rosmuc

The newspaper also reported that while a conference of Saor Éire was being held in Killarney, Co. Kerry, in the local Gaelic League Hall, a party of C.I.D. officers entered, led by an Inspector, and ordered the fifty men present at the meeting to line up for a search. When Sean MacBride asked to see a warrant, the Inspector refused. Letters and documents were read aloud despite protests, and nine policemen remained in the hall for over an hour. A resolution was passed protesting against police interference with the rights of citizens to meet in conference. Delegates were duly nominated to attend the forthcoming Saor Éire Congress in Dublin.

It was also outlined that at a public address in Castlebar, the Minister for Justice, Mr Fitzgerald-Kenney, made the claim that there existed in Ireland an organisation-or possibly two-namely Saor Éire and the Irish Republican Army, which he asserted were effectively one and the same. He alleged that their shared objective was to impose a Soviet-style republic on the country, through intimidation and violent means. The irritated paper claimed that it was a "slanderous" statement, on the basis that the IRA and Saor Éire had separate constitutions, but any reasonable person with an understanding of the background would see that the Minister for Justice was correct.[199] Up to this juncture, previous issues of '*An Phoblacht*' itself had shown that they were effectively such, and appears to be the primary paper through which Saor Éire's activities were promoted.

Not long later, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that a central principle promoted by Saor Éire was the use of state credit to create and expand native industries, placing control in the hands of workers. Interestingly, it noted, Eamon de Valera (leader of Fianna Fáil) had anticipated this supposed appeal during a speech in Co. Wicklowaround that time, aligning

[199] *An Phoblacht 19/9/1931*

with Saor Éire's position. As expected, in '*An Phoblacht's*' view, the '*Irish Independent*' responded predictably, opposing any proposal to use national wealth or credit for the development of domestic industry.

A livid editorial also appeared in this edition. It was reported that public attacks had been launched against Saor Éire by Free State Ministers, Dr. Fogarty, and other politicians. Reckless accusations, it claimed, were made without any supporting evidence. What it regarded as an unscrupulous campaign had been underway to create an atmosphere for terrorist attacks on the organisation, cloaked in supposed "lies and prejudice." It was alleged that Saor Éire was anti-religious and un-Christian. This attempt to provoke religious prejudice was seen in the publication's view as sinister, and those responsible were warned of the potentially dangerous consequences. There was concern that this might be laying the groundwork for another political pronouncement disguised as religious authority, reminiscent of what had occurred 1922, with similarly damaging outcomes for both religion and the nation. The raising of what the paper claimed were false religious issues for political ends was condemned. It was asserted that religious matters or beliefs formed no part of Saor Éire's programme or objectives. Its position, it claimed, was rooted in the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic, which had guaranteed religious liberty to all citizens. The paper asserted that Saor Éire drew its inspiration from Irish history and the traditions of the national struggle; it was an entirely independent Irish movement, so they claimed. Meanwhile, it asserted the prevailing economic and social system was collapsing, and those currently responsible for leadership had taken no practical steps to address the consequences. Crisis and disaster loomed over the Irish masses, who were supposedly left without leadership or direction. Saor Éire, it claimed, was launched with a constructive programme outlining how Irish life and resources could be organised to meet the country's conditions and needs. Was the hostile alliance afraid of these proposals and their implications - and if so, it asked, why?

The same issue also featured an editorial which opined that the oppressed and discontented had looked to the Republican movement for leadership. They had, supposedly, placed their hopes in it, and Saor Éire had provided the plan through which the dispossessed and exploited could be organised, and led forward to victory. The goal was an Irish Republic, entirely severed from imperial commitments and obligations - a republic where the exploitation by a privileged minority would be ended, and the resources of the nation returned to the people, to be used for their collective benefit. Every citizen was to be guaranteed a livelihood and sufficient means of existence. Industry was to serve the community, rather than generate profit for individuals as it had done in the past. The paper claimed that it was no surprise, then, that Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenney - and the supposed interests he merely represented as a "mouthpiece" - had been alarmed. The publication declared that the task of keeping the "natives" loyal to imperial ties and submissive to imperial demands was becoming increasingly difficult and would soon prove impossible. Once the people gathered in their strength, they would swiftly dismantle the imperial bailiffs and their ruling clique. Republicans, it claimed, had to remain attuned to the changing situation, prepared to play a leading role in the imminent struggle against the consolidated forces of imperialist capitalism.

Additionally, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that their writer had been present at a G.A.A. Convention the previous year, where plans had been made to hold a Gaelic tournament to raise funds for the fishermen's organisation. Once again, it claimed, the issue was resurfacing prominently: what was going to be done about it? Even Tim Healy, the paper asserted, had recognised the justice of the fishermen's claim. Had he not written '*The Great Fraud of Ulster*' to establish their supposed legal right? It was sincerely hoped by the paper that the Nationalists in the Six Counties would unite and become vocal-moving beyond passive commentary on the matter. For example, both the Nationalist representatives and the Stormont assembly could have drawn much-needed attention to the issue - if they had wished to. Saor Éire, at any rate, had taken up the matter, according to the paper. In the

same section, it was documented that orange agitators had disrupted a workers' meeting in Ballymoney, Antrim. Fools, indeed, the paper claimed-could they not grasp the significance of the fact that the workers' leaders in Ballymoney had included both a Catholic and a Protestant? The section concluded that much public engagement work had been needed in that area.[200]

At the turn of October, '*An Phoblacht*' outlined that they had recommended their readers to study closely "The Clarion Call of Saor Éire," which had been published in that issue. There, the case had been clearly outlined; the aims and methods of imperialism were exposed, and a remedy had been suggested. Saor Éire had provided a lead which, if followed, could have achieved the reconquest. The alleged vested interests had recognised in that Clarion Call the writing on the wall. As a result, they had launched a virulent campaign of supposed "slander" against Saor Éire, in preparation for the introduction of new repressive legislation designed to crush Ireland's revolutionary masses. But both the slander and the coercion, they claimed, were destined to fail. It was claimed that the Irish people, sound in heart as ever, had refused to be sidetracked from the task they had undertaken. Through Saor Éire, they had supposedly mobilised. They had allegedly exposed the illusions spread by the reformists and constitutionalists; they had also unmasked the agents-whether knowingly or unknowingly-of imperialism; and they had united in the effort to dismantle the imperialist-capitalist system-the most foul and alien force ever imposed upon Ireland. It was outlined that 'Saor Éire' translated to 'Free Ireland.' They had called for the liberation of Ireland from the grip of the plundering Empire. They had demanded the destruction of the degrading system that had kept Ireland enslaved and impoverished. And how, they had asked, could Ireland be freed? The answer had been clear: Ireland's freedom could only be secured by the mass of the Irish people, fully mobilised and aware that the goal of their struggle must be the establishment of an Irish Republic. Such a Republic would be based on the ownership and democratic

[200] *An Phoblacht 26/9/1931*

control by working farmers and wage-earners of the land, and the instruments of production, distribution, and exchange. It had been understood, in their view, that ridding Ireland of British imperialism required nothing less than the abolition of the inhumane and degrading social system. They supposedly had rallied under Saor Éire, and joined with the Sovereign People in the reconquest of Ireland.

In the aforementioned feature published by '*An Phoblacht*,' Republican voices asserted that the Irish people-especially workers and small farmers-had been betrayed in the years following the Easter Rising. They claimed that the 1916 Proclamation had not merely been a call for political independence, but also a radical social declaration-one which recognised the sovereignty of the Irish people and called for public ownership of land and productive resources. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' James Connolly, who they regarded as the true ideological beacon of the Rising, had envisioned an Irish Republic built on the collective ownership of land, tools, and the means of production. They argued that the central evil was not only British rule, but also the exploitative capitalist system which, in their view, persisted after formal independence. The publication accused several post-Rising political developments-especially the policies associated with Arthur Griffith-of abandoning these revolutionary ideals. Rather than seeking to abolish what they called a "degrading social system," '*An Phoblacht*' claimed that the emerging Free State government merely aimed to replace British imperial rule with an Irish capitalist elite. They contended that the parliament as newly established had turned its back on direct action by the masses, especially the landless poor and small-holders who had demanded redistribution of land and relief from rent burdens. While Republican rhetoric spoke of freedom and resistance, '*An Phoblacht*' insisted that the government's practical actions had betrayed these aspirations.

The piece alleged that instead of redistributing ranch land directly to small farmers, the Free State introduced a policy of purchase and repayment that left recipients saddled with debt. In their words, this reduced emancipation to a process

of indebted resettlement rather than liberation. They also condemned the emergence of Republican courts and institutions, which they said had served to protect the interests of landlords, banks, and capitalists, rather than to empower the working classes. According to their analysis, the fledgling Republican state apparatus had been used to suppress mass struggle and cement the control of a native bourgeoisie over the lives of ordinary people. '*An Phoblacht*' claimed that the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty solidified this betrayal. They interpreted the Treaty as a bargain by which native capitalists secured their own privileges under British oversight. The subsequent anti-Treaty struggle, in their view, was not only a separatist rebellion against inclusion in the Empire, but also a thwarted uprising for social and economic justice. The article sharply criticised the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland, accusing them of siding with imperial interests, and using their influence to discredit Republicans. It claimed that their condemnation of anti-Treaty forces helped suppress revolutionary sentiment among the broader population.

The burdens imposed by the Treaty, according to '*An Phoblacht*,' were severe. They highlighted what they saw as the unjust financial arrangements that required the Free State to contribute to the British Exchequer and fund dual state structures in Belfast and Dublin. They claimed this drained resources from a population already struggling with poverty and economic collapse.

From their perspective, the economic situation in the late 1920s and early 1930s had become catastrophic. They asserted that agricultural prices had plummeted, wages had stagnated or fallen, and indebtedness among farmers had reached crisis levels. '*An Phoblacht*' accused the Free State government of prioritising the interests of large landholders and grazier elites, while marginalising small-holders and landless labourers. They claimed that land consolidation and the erosion of tillage had deepened rural poverty, with large farms consuming an ever-greater share of agricultural land while the majority struggled on marginal holdings. Meanwhile, they alleged that vast swathes of land had been

allowed to fall out of productive cultivation, contributing to depopulation and economic decay in rural areas.

According to the article, the profits of agriculture had increasingly flowed to a narrow class of commercial farmers, financiers, and foreign bondholders. '*An Phoblacht*' alleged that millions were being extracted annually from working farmers in the form of rents and land annuities-payments which, they claimed, represented a continuation of colonial exploitation under a different guise. They also criticised the Free State government for acting as what they called a mere collection agent for bondholders, facilitating the flow of wealth from Irish farmers to British and Irish financial interests. Ultimately, the article argued that the goals of the 1916 Proclamation remained unfulfilled. '*An Phoblacht*' called upon workers and small farmers to organise, not just for political independence, but also for the economic transformation of Irish society. They insisted that the only way to complete the national revolution was through collective action to reclaim land, wealth, and power from both foreign and domestic exploiters.

The front page of this edition also remarked that an "enthusiastic Saor Éire congress" had taken place. In its "Home Affairs" coverage, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on two key resolutions emerging from the movement's national assembly-one agricultural and one industrial. These resolutions, the paper asserted, captured the demands and voiced the slogans of the two foundational pillars of Saor Éire: the workers of the land and the workers of the town. The agricultural resolution was reportedly unflinching in its call:

> *"No Forced Sales! Free the Rivers! Down with the Land Commission!"*

According to '*An Phoblacht*,' these slogans expressed the grassroots anger of working farmers and landless labourers alike. The resolution demanded that the working farmer be confirmed securely in his holding; that banks and other usurious institutions be publicly indicted for their

exploitation; and that the landless men of Ireland be granted their rightful share of the unbroken ranches still in the hands of the privileged few. The publication noted that these calls struck a deep chord - “the anvil of race passion,” as it described it - with reverberations felt throughout the entire assembly. It was, the report suggested, not only a social or economic issue, but one entwined with national memory and historical grievance.

Furthermore, in yet another scathing critique, ‘*An Phoblacht*’ condemned what it described as the "murder regime" that had enforced the Treaty against the will of the Irish masses. The publication claimed that these forces had lost the confidence of the very class they purported to represent-evident, it argued, in their need to hold meetings behind closed doors, afraid to face the people openly in the streets of Dublin. ‘*An Phoblacht*’ drew a direct parallel between Cumann na nGaedheal in the South and the Craigavon Government in the North, asserting that both represented reactionary forces upholding imperialist interests. The paper further accused Joe Devlin’s faction-identified as the remnants of the old Redmondite Parliamentary Party in the North-of cloaking itself in hollow nationalist rhetoric, rhetoric which it claimed posed no real threat to imperialism in the North-East. This, they argued, was no more meaningful than the “Republican” language employed by Fianna Fáil in the South, which '*An Phoblacht*’ claimed failed to challenge the structural basis of British imperialism. The Labour Party in the North-East, according to the paper, had shown its true colours by supporting the MacDonald Government in its defence of capitalism and empire. ‘*An Phoblacht*’ asserted that the party now backed Arthur Henderson, whom it accused of working to defuse mass anger stirred by the MacDonald betrayal. The publication cited recent events in Belfast as evidence of a rising revolutionary working-class leadership that was beginning to challenge the financial structures of imperialism and shake off old illusions. This movement, it claimed, paralleled the rise of Saor Éire in the South-an organisation it described as the mobilisation of militant workers and working farmers

who recognised that the fight against imperialism must also include confronting domestic capitalist interests.

'*An Phoblacht*' outlined Saor Éire's key slogans-"No Rent; No Forced Sales; No Grabbers"-and asserted that the movement sought to rally the Irish people into direct conflict with native exploiters, whom it characterised as active collaborators with British imperialism. According to the paper, Ireland's freedom could not be achieved through constitutional manoeuvring or partial reform. Rather, it argued, true liberation required a mass mobilisation of the Irish people, united in the struggle for a Republic rooted in collective ownership and control of land and the means of production, distribution, and exchange. It concluded by claiming that the only path to national and social freedom lay in the abolition of the inhuman and degrading capitalist social system, which it saw as inseparable from the imperialist domination of Ireland.

This issue also referred to a public meeting, where Seán MacBride spoke on the founding purpose and programme of Saor Éire - a radical political movement established to reshape Ireland along socialist-republican lines. According to the report, MacBride explained that Saor Éire had been formed to consolidate an Irish Republic on a new social and economic foundation. Its core aim was to ensure that the land and the means of production, distribution, and exchange would be owned and administered by the workers and working farmers of Ireland. The movement also pledged to revive and strengthen the Irish language and national culture as part of its broader programme of national renewal. To achieve these goals, Saor Éire proposed to build local action committees among both industrial and agricultural workers. These committees were tasked with leading day-to-day struggles for improved conditions, while also mobilising the broader Irish population in support of a revolutionary government. This, the movement argued, would be the vehicle for ending British imperialism in Ireland and establishing a Workers' and Working Farmers' Republic. Michael Price of Dublin, who seconded the motion at the meeting, had expressed the depth of frustration and

disillusionment felt by IRA activists, both young and old, in the face of economic injustice. He condemned the prevailing system where production was driven by profit rather than by the needs of the people, and he linked widespread poverty and suffering in Ireland directly to the capitalist pursuit of profit. This specific '*An Phoblacht*' article positioned Saor Éire as a natural continuation of the revolutionary tradition, combining the goals of self-governing liberation with a transformative social programme, grounded in working-class interests.

A report from the time described an extraordinary display of activity by the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) during the weekend of the Saor Éire Congress. Throughout Saturday morning, while the Congress was still in session, C.I.D. officers carried out widespread raids. Among those targeted were the homes of the Secretary of Saor Éire and the Editor of An Phoblacht, both of whom faced searches and surveillance. The offices of the Republican newspaper were surrounded, and raids extended to the residences of various known Republicans. Several individuals were reportedly followed and harassed over the course of the weekend. After the Congress concluded, further action was taken by the authorities. C.I.D. forces entered Iona Hall-where the Congress had taken place-and conducted additional searches. Approximately 150 delegates had been in attendance, including representatives from all six counties of the North and from the Free State. The police presence was clearly aimed at disrupting the gathering and intimidating those involved in organising or supporting the movement. This wave of raids was widely interpreted as a direct response by the authorities to the political message and revolutionary tone of the Congress, and reflected the growing tension between Republican socialists and both the Free State and Northern administrations.[201]

On the same date, the noted political periodical paper '*Nationality*' (supportive of the establishment of the Irish Free State, and originally edited by pro-Treaty leader, Arthur

[201] *An Phoblacht 3/10/1931*

Griffith) released a scathing critique of the organisation. It remarked that according to a report provided by Mrs Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, acting as Press Secretary, the new organisation known as Saor Éire had attracted unwelcome attention from the detective force during its first Congress. It was reported that "outside the Iona Hall on both days of the Congress [September 26th and 27th], a large force of C.I.D. officers had gathered; at one point, a dozen vehicles filled with detectives had assembled." Moreover, throughout that weekend, Dublin City had also witnessed heightened police activity. Several prominent hardline republicans had their homes raided in the early morning, and all day long, detectives-both on foot and in vehicles-had shadowed their movements. This display of official vigilance, in its view, had clearly been orchestrated by the Minister for Justice, who appeared to have a keen sense of theatrical timing. For it was evident that the individuals being monitored had long been on the C.I.D.'s radar, and no new information could have justified such co-ordinated raids at that particular moment.

The paper remarked that the aims of Saor Éire had not been hidden. The pamphlet accompanying the press statement from Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington (the well known suffragist and hardline Irish Republican) reportedly made their objectives entirely clear. One full page on its cover had featured a list of "Down With" and "Long Live" slogans, most notably: "All Power to the Workers and Working Farmers"-regarded as an unmistakable endorsement of an Irish "Workers' Republic." The newspaper remarked that, to use the pamphlet's own language in reference to Mr Joe Devlin, it had attempted to cloak its communism "under nationalistic phrases."

It was pointed out that the new publication by Saor Éire had begun by re-producing the 1916 Easter Week Proclamation of the Irish Republic, then moved swiftly into attacks on the "Arthur Griffith school" of political thought and its policies. It had condemned Cumann na nGaedheal as "the mouthpiece of the Bank of Ireland groupings." Fianna Fáil's emergence was also traced back to Clann Éireann, described as remnants of Griffith's politics, which had supposedly joined with other republicans demanding a more nationalistic interpretation of

the Treaty, in an effort to dismantle the imperialist clique controlling the Free State. Fianna Fáil was then criticised as "the party of the Irish middle class," accused of misleading a portion of the working class, and an originally Anti-Treaty party that was continuing along the path taken by the Griffith–Collins Free State government of 1922. The Irish Labour Party, too, had not escaped criticism from Saor Éire. It was described as having abandoned any real claim to its working-class representation, and labelled as a mere "adventurist grouping" that held meetings behind closed doors, allegedly too afraid to take to the streets of Dublin City. In summary, the pamphlet had dismissed all existing political parties as being out of step, which '*Nationality*' quipped was like a fond mother critiquing the Edinburgh militia - except for their own. Additionally, "their own," namely Saor Éire, had presented itself as a revolutionary, working-class movement, which was supposedly inspired by Bolshevism, and committed to similar aims.[202] [203]

During October 1931, in a sharply worded propaganda article circulated through the IRA's '*An Phoblacht*,' the organisation issued a scathing denunciation of both the British imperial presence in Ireland and the domestic regimes in what it referred to as the Six and Twenty-Six Counties. The piece combined calls for solidarity, revolutionary mobilisation, and international alignment with anti-colonial struggles abroad, while directly attacking the policies and actions of the Dublin and Belfast governments. Central to the message was an urgent appeal regarding the condition of political prisoners held in various Irish prisons. The article alleged a campaign of degradation and psychological torture directed at these prisoners, claiming they were subjected to solitary confinement, malnourishment, and denial of their political status. It accused the authorities of deliberately attempting to strip these prisoners of their dignity by forcing criminal garb upon them and denying them basic rights, such as association during exercise. The tone conveyed unambiguous solidarity

[202] *Nationality 3/10/1931*

[203] *'Nationality.' Irish Newspaper Archives.*

with those incarcerated, praising their resistance and calling upon the republican movement and broader working-class organisations to agitate for their release and proper recognition as political detainees. The piece broadened its scope to express ideological alignment with anti-imperialist struggles beyond Ireland's borders, offering fraternal greetings to the Indian people in their fight against British rule. It praised Indian revolutionaries who had died in combat or under execution, pledging support for the establishment of a workers' republic in India. This internationalist stance was meant to situate the Irish republican cause within a wider global resistance to imperialism and capitalism.

Turning back to the domestic political situation, the article levelled harsh criticism at what it described as impending "terrorist legislation" in the Free State - a set of laws it claimed were being introduced to suppress growing mass resistance. It asserted that both the Dublin and Belfast governments functioned as enforcers for imperialist and capitalist interests, and that their primary aim was to insulate the ruling class from the social unrest arising from economic crisis and poverty. The Free State cabinet, in particular, was painted as a collection of morally compromised figures driven by self-preservation and beholden to the demands of the bourgeoisie and the press barons. The article argued that repressive measures, including secret military courts and the creation of new paramilitary-style police forces, were evidence of fear within the state. It likened the situation to the days of the Black and Tans and warned that the authorities were once again hoping to provoke isolated armed resistance in order to justify a crackdown. The piece framed this as a deliberate attempt to separate guerrilla fighters from the broader mass movement, and to portray revolutionary activity as criminal rather than political.

In response, '*An Phoblacht*' called for strategic discipline and political clarity. It urged the republican movement to work within communities to expose the true nature of state repression, to resist provocation into isolated violence, and to build alliances with working-class families, particularly those

whose sons and daughters served in the police or army. These families were encouraged to oppose the role their children were being asked to play as enforcers of British and Free State repression. The article concluded with a renewed emphasis on mass mobilisation, urging demonstrations at home and abroad - particularly outside Irish state offices and British consulates - to demand an end to repression and to assert the sovereignty of the Irish working class. It was, above all, a call for unity in action against both local collaborators and the imperial system they served.

Mary MacSwiney, writing in '*An Phoblacht*,' expressed her view on the recent attacks against the organisation Saor Éire. She argued that when any organisation was criticised or attacked, especially by enemies of the Republic, it was natural to examine why that group was seen as a threat. She noted that the tirades of Fitzgerald-Kenney and his colleagues might have caused some to adopt a silence or hush policy, but she believed such a response would be foolish. According to MacSwiney, if an organisation was built on a worthy ideal and possessed the hope of victory, then honest criticism could only be helpful. MacSwiney explained that Saor Éire, in its manifesto and draft constitution, had taken its stand on the Proclamation of Easter Week. It had called upon the incorruptible custodians of that tradition to organise committees and push forward in the struggle for Ireland's freedom. She observed that the Proclamation of 1916 guaranteed "equal rights and equal opportunities for all citizens," and Saor Éire's aim, as she understood it, was to vest political power in the hands of the working class and working farmers-similar to what Labour Parties in Britain and elsewhere sought.

However, MacSwiney raised a crucial question about the meaning of "worker" or "working-class." She recalled that during a discussion in An Phoblacht the previous winter, she had asked repeatedly for a clear definition, but no satisfactory conclusion was reached. She pointed out that "working class" commonly referred to industrial manual labourers. If Saor Éire's constitution used the term in this narrow sense, she warned, it suggested an intent to confine

the national struggle within the limits of a class war-a development she deplored. For MacSwiney, there should be only one class in Ireland: the real Irish people united against foreign domination in all its forms, political, economic, and cultural. She insisted that a free Irish Republic would necessarily be a Workers' Republic, but the term "worker" must be understood broadly. She referred to Michael Price's recent speech in West Clare, where he had defined workers as all those engaged in useful and productive work necessary for the welfare of the nation, including those who worked with their minds such as teachers, doctors, writers, and musicians. MacSwiney stated that she was willing to accept that definition.

She noted that '*An Phoblacht's*' editor, in commenting on Price's speech, said it clearly outlined the aims of the resurgent separatist movement, and she hoped that the paper supported Price's inclusive definition, while repudiating any suggestion of class warfare. Yet, she pointed out that Saor Éire itself had not publicly adopted this definition. Following its convention on 27th September, there was no indication that Saor Éire had rejected class warfare or clarified the term "worker."

MacSwiney emphasised the importance of resolving this issue immediately. She reported that some supporters of Saor Éire claimed manual workers alone would control everything under the constitution, while several others who worked intellectually might be accepted only if they consented to it. She criticised this stance and demanded that the constitution must clearly define "worker" in a way that included all real people of Ireland. The distinction made between "working class" and "working farmers" indicated, in her view, a narrow and potentially divisive approach. She urged Saor Éire to issue a plain and unequivocal public statement on the matter. MacSwiney concluded by reaffirming that Sinn Féin stood not only for the 1916 Proclamation but also for the establishment of the Republic in 1919, which had endorsed the Proclamation's ideals. She recalled that every member of the Provisional Government had been executed for those beliefs. She pointed out that Saor Éire's programme did not

contain any principles of social justice not already accepted by Sinn Féin and set out in the Democratic Programme of Dáil Éireann. These principles had been elaborated in the Republic's Draft Constitution, which had been offered to the Irish people for discussion and amendment. She urged against reinventing what had already been clearly stated and accepted, calling on Saor Éire to clarify its position and definition of terms so that all the people of Ireland-both manual and intellectual workers - could be united in pursuit of a free and just Republic.

The same edition documented that now that, through what had been perceived as a most representative Congress, Saor Éire had been launched and its Constitution created, the attention of all Branch and District Organising Committees was drawn to the paragraphs in the organisation's Constitution dealing with "Organisation" and "District and Provincial Committees."

Branch Organising Committees were required to come together immediately and call a general meeting of all Branch members, at which initiation fees of 1/- per head would be collected from all present and the regular Branch Committees, as shown in the Constitution, set up. No doubt the acting Branch Committee would be confirmed in their officership in all cases. When this had been done, the Secretary of the Branch was to inform the Secretary of Saor Éire, 4 Cavendish Row, Dublin, that the Branch had been regularly organised. With this communication, 50 per cent of all initiation fees, as stipulated in the Constitution, was to be sent. Thus, the Branch would be regularly affiliated with the Head Offices of Saor Éire.

At that time, Dublin was the only area in Ireland where the creation of a District Committee, to co-ordinate the activities of several Branches, had been approved. It was the duty of the Dublin District Organising Committee to ensure that General Meetings of all Branches in Dublin were held as set out above, Branch Committees formed, and the District Committee then formed as shown in the Constitution. The District Secretary of Dublin District was then to notify the

Secretary of Saor Éire at the Head Offices that their Branches, Branch Committees, and the District Committees had been set up in accordance with the Constitution; such notification was to enclose the usual percentage of affiliation fees to regularise affiliation. To regularise the relations between Branches and the Head Office, all Branches were urged to affiliate formally without delay. All Branch Secretaries were requested to note that the following printed publication was now available: "Indictment of Capitalism and Parliamentary Parties in Ireland: Resolutions adopted by the National Congress, Saor Éire." The price was 2d. each or 1/- per dozen. Printed copies of the Constitution of Saor Éire were also available from David Fitzgerald, Secretary, Saor Éire, 4 Cavendish Row, Dublin.

It was also reported in the paper that Dáil Éireann had been asked for a statement regarding the attitude to be adopted by loyal citizens of the Republic towards a new organisation that proposed to unite "the working class and working farmers" on the basis of the Proclamation of 1916, described as a form of class revolutionary organisation. It was the opinion that a National, not a solely Class basis, was the only hope of uniting the people of Ireland. However, in so far as any organisation could work to bring together, on the basis of the Proclamation of 1916, those citizens of Ireland who were not eligible, or not willing, to join Sinn Féin or Cumann na mBán, Dáil Éireann saw no reason to condemn any worthy effort. Any attempt to create class distinctions or promote class warfare was deprecated, and it was pointed out that there were no such distinctions in the Proclamation, which was their common charter. Loyal Republicans were advised to be on their guard against any attempt to entice or force them to surrender their allegiance. It was further emphasised that all social justice aimed for was contained in the 'Democratic Programme' of the original Dáil Éireann, on which their Constitution was based.

'*An Phoblacht*' reported on the objectives and strategy of Saor Éire, describing it as an organisation of workers and working farmers committed to revolutionary change in Ireland. The group's stated aims were to establish an

independent revolutionary leadership for the working class and working farmers, with the ultimate goal of overthrowing British imperialism and its ally, Irish capitalism. Saor Éire sought to organise and consolidate the Irish Republic on the basis of land and the means of production, distribution, and exchange being owned and managed by the workers and working farmers. Additionally, the organisation emphasised the restoration and promotion of the Irish language, culture, and traditional games. To achieve these aims, Saor Éire planned to organise committees of action among industrial and agricultural workers to lead day-to-day struggles. It aimed to foster close co-operation between rural and urban workers, highlighting their shared interests and common opposition to exploitation. The mobilisation of the Irish masses behind a revolutionary government was also central to their strategy, with a vision of establishing a 'Workers' and Working Farmers' Republic.' The Irish language was intended to be promoted in all possible areas, especially within the organisation itself.

The report outlined that Saor Éire viewed its task as unfolding in two phases. The first phase involved intensive organisational work, propaganda, and daily activism to unite small farmers, agricultural labourers, and industrial workers into a solid front of mass resistance. This included collective action against rents, evictions, strikes, wage cuts, and other forms of economic oppression imposed by what they described as imperialist and capitalist interests. The second phase would focus on consolidating power through the organisation of the economy within the proposed workers' and farmers' republic. Upon achieving political power, the revolutionary working class was expected to dismantle the existing imperialist and capitalist systems, replacing old structures with new forms of governance. Key aspects included establishing state control over banking, credit, exports, imports, and public transport. Landlordism was to be abolished, without any compensation, and efforts would be made to increase agricultural productivity through access to credit, machinery, and co-operative farming. The programme also envisaged state-supported co-operative industries and worker-regulated labour conditions. Fisheries were to be

reorganised co-operatively and expanded with state assistance. Housing provision was to be addressed by forming co-operatives of workers in the building trades, with rents fixed in proportion to wages. A minimum standard of living was to be guaranteed for all citizens, whether employed or unemployed. This vision articulated by Saor Éire, as reported by '*An Phoblacht*,' combined revolutionary socialism with cultural nationalism, aiming to radically transform Irish society and its economy in the pursuit of full independence and social justice.

This issue of '*An Phoblacht*' also documented the vision articulated by IRA organiser and Saor Éire's founding chairman, Seán Hayes, who opened proceedings with a speech that situated the movement as the next phase in Ireland's long struggle for national independence and social justice. He declared the Congress "historic," marking a revival of the revolutionary tradition aimed at ending British rule and dismantling the imperial institutions that, aided by the Irish state apparatus, were being used by both foreign and domestic elites to exploit the Irish people. Hayes reflected on the setbacks caused by the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which he described as a betrayal that divided the revolutionary movement. The time since had been spent rebuilding. Recent months, he noted, had seen a rapid resurgence of national and social consciousness, fuelled in large part by worsening economic conditions. The Saor Éire Congress, in his view, was a visible sign of that momentum-and the alarm it caused among opponents was proof of its potential.

Hayes urged delegates to begin by assessing the real conditions facing Irish people. Drawing from his own experience in rural County Clare, he described scenes of widespread unemployment and poverty, with up to 100 men in his small home town out of work, standing idle and hungry on street corners. Poor housing and sanitation were rampant, and no effort was being made to address these issues. The cities, he warned, were even worse. In Dublin, Cork, and Limerick, unemployment and misery had reached "appalling" levels, and landlords continued to demand rent from those with nothing. Rural Ireland, too, was suffering -

small farmers could barely survive and could not afford to employ others, leaving young people without hope or work. Hayes called it "criminal" that no meaningful action had been taken. He insisted that the movement must plan not just for resistance, but for a victory that would improve life for the working class and small farmers-not just shift burdens from one group to another. The aim, he said, was collective liberation, not personal advancement.

While removing British control remained central, Hayes stressed that true freedom also meant confronting the Irish elites who had prospered by supporting imperialism. He condemned those who served British interests while presenting themselves as patriots, calling them obstacles to genuine national liberation. He predicted that Saor Éire's challenge to this system would draw fierce opposition and smear campaigns. Already, he said, the group was being falsely accused of threatening religion - an accusation he firmly rejected. Saor Éire, Hayes affirmed, stood by the principle of religious liberty as guaranteed in the 1916 Proclamation.

Furthermore, Hayes placed Saor Éire within a proud tradition of Irish revolutionaries who had faced vilification in their time-from Wolfe Tone and the Fenians to Parnell, the 1916 leaders, and the Republican dead of 1922. He cited examples of how those who had once fought for Ireland were now being denounced by the very forces that had sought to destroy them. He warned that more attacks would come, accusing Saor Éire of blasphemy or sacrilege-not because of any actual threat to faith, but because it dared to confront landlords and imperialists. But, Hayes assured his listeners, such accusations were nothing new-and they would not stop the work of building a truly free and just Irish Republic.[204]

A few days later, the '*Irish Press*' reported that, in a Dáil debate, Deputy William Davin (Labour) had repeated his question as to whether Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenney possessed a document more recent than 1925. Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenney

[204] *An Phoblacht 10/10/1931*

responded that he had not, and insisted he had never claimed otherwise. "Tell that to Deputy Hassett," Deputy Davin retorted. Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenney went on to assert that there had been continuous communication among irregular forces, some of which, he alleged, had helped make Russia a byword for disorder. He claimed that the Saor Éire organisation had been founded on Soviet principles and was linked with the I.R.A. According to him, an analysis of the Saor Éire programme had revealed its primary objectives, which he characterised as subversive. He dismissed Deputy Lemass's remarks about abolishing the Oath of Allegiance as "foolish nonsense," arguing that such a move would not pacify the organisations involved. He contended that it was absurd to believe that Communists would become law-abiding citizens merely because the oath was removed.[205]

Around this same time, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on the first public meeting held under the auspices of Saor Éire in Cork City centre, which took place on the final Wednesday evening of September, beneath the National Monument on the Grand Parade. The site, only a short distance from where the statue of King William once stood in the River Lee, allegedly saw a crowd of over 5,000 gather to hear a series of speeches that placed Irish struggles within a wider global context of anti-imperialist resistance.

One of the principal speakers, the renowned Mr. Shapurji Saklatvala of Battersea North (the first Labour MP of Indian heritage, and a well-known communist activist - by this time, he was an MP for the Communist Party of Great Britain), was received warmly by the audience. He addressed issues of colonial exploitation by British capitalism, drawing direct comparisons between the economic subjugation of Ireland and that of other British-controlled territories, such as India, Africa, and Egypt. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' Saklatvala highlighted the immense social degradation and material poverty imposed on India through over a century of imperial control, which he argued had devastated the country more severely than even Ireland's long colonial experience. He

[205] *Irish Press 16/10/1931*

further criticised the global leadership of trade unions, accusing them of posturing as revolutionaries while ultimately serving capitalist interests by avoiding any action that might endanger their privileged positions. The article relayed his view that such leaders used revolutionary rhetoric merely as a means to gain access to political appointments and social privileges.

The meeting also heard from Mr. Peadar O'Donnell, who condemned the ongoing evictions and seizures occurring across Ireland, and pointed to growing unemployment as evidence of the failure of the Free State's capitalist model. He recalled the betrayal of workers during the events of 1922, describing how revolutionary ideals had been traded away for subordinate roles within the structures of British power.

According to '*An Phoblacht*,' O'Donnell emphasised that clarity had since emerged, with small farmers increasingly recognising that their true allies were the industrial workers of the towns - not the business or professional classes. He challenged the audience to consider how few bankers, lawyers, or business people had ever meaningfully participated in republican or revolutionary activity. Mr. Seán Murray (also of the IRA) followed with remarks on Cork's suitability as a gathering place for anti-capitalist organisers, drawing attention to the Ford factory as a symbol of failed industrial promise that had instead contributed to deepening economic hardship. He also criticised the proposed Coercion Act, soon to be introduced in the Free State parliament, warning of further repression. From his perspective in the North, where anti-republican legislation was already quite extensive, he remarked that there was scarcely room for additional laws. The event concluded with enthusiastic applause and cheers for both Irish political prisoners, and the vision of a future Irish Workers' Republic.

Additionally, as reported in the paper, in the fortnight following Saor Éire's National Congress, branch and temporary committee activity had intensified, with efforts now focused on organisational consolidation across the

country. '*An Phoblacht*' had also reported that National Organisational Memorandum No. 1 had been circulated to all branch secretaries and published in the paper itself, emphasising the need for regularisation in all existing groups. Branches where temporary officers had been appointed prior to the Congress were expected by now to have held general meetings, elected permanent officers, and submitted their formal affiliations to Headquarters in accordance with the Saor Éire Constitution. The principal task at hand was the creation of groups in every parish, with a view to building local organisation and increasing awareness of the Constitution and programme of Saor Éire. Local branches and committees were urged to take the lead in this process, especially through the holding of public meetings. '*An Phoblacht*' encouraged the use of chapel-gate meetings on Sundays and events on fair and market days as means to engage local communities. The National Executive committed to supporting such efforts, including the attendance and participation of Executive members to bolster local organising efforts.

While it was considered early to expect widespread organisational development beyond consolidating existing branches, '*An Phoblacht*' noted encouraging reports from counties Kerry and Mayo. Several new branches had already been formed, and the responsiveness and initiative of local organisers in these counties were commended. Interest in the movement had grown nationally, with requests for information received from across the country. In response, the organisation distributed its Constitution along with the pamphlet '*Indictment of Capitalism and Parliamentary Parties in Ireland*.' These materials were deemed sufficient to provide a clear introduction to Saor Éire's aims and programme, even to those unfamiliar with its background. Branch secretaries and local organisers were advised to maintain adequate stocks of both documents. The Constitution was made available free of charge, while the Indictment pamphlet was published at a twopenny price but offered to branches at a rate of one shilling per dozen copies, plus postage. It was noted that orders could be made through the organisation's office at 1 Cavendish Row, Dublin. Three

public meetings under Saor Éire's banner were also scheduled for West Clare on Sunday, 18th October. These were to take place in Kilmihil after the 9 o'clock Mass, in Cooraclare at noon, and in the Market Square of Kilrush at 6 p.m. Additional meetings were being organised for North Wexford and West Mayo, with dates to be announced in future issues of '*An Phoblacht*'.

The National Executive held its first post-Congress meeting on 10th October at the organisation's offices in Dublin. The Executive assessed developments since the Congress and mapped out the next phase of its programme. Two specialised sub-committees were established in order to manage tasks related to the implementation of resolutions on various industrial and agricultural matters. The Executive had expressed confidence that these sub-committees-composed of individuals with relevant experience-would ensure effective execution of the tasks ahead. A decision was also taken for the treasurers to issue a public appeal for funds. The Executive also addressed the growing campaign of falsehoods and distortions being directed at Saor Éire. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' critics had failed to engage with the organisation's core positions-its Constitution and critique of capitalism-opting instead to spread accusations that Saor Éire was anti-religious or backed by foreign interests. The article dismissed these claims as deliberate falsehoods, arguing that such a campaign represented capitalism's final line of defence in Ireland.

As per this same issue, Ireland, once again stirred from political slumber, stood at a critical juncture. The working people of the country - both urban labourers and rural small-holders - had begun to recognise their shared interests and mutual struggle. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' despite the efforts of so-called "West Briton sages" and self-serving politicians to obscure the truth, the masses had started to see through the fog of political deceit, designed to keep them divided and subdued. Historically, it claimed, the worker had too often been misled by competing political factions, whose chief aim was personal advancement and the perks of office. These factions exploited elections to turn worker against

worker, encouraging mistrust and division where unity should have prevailed. The question of identity among the oppressed classes was raised plainly: who, in truth, were Ireland's workers? Upon reflection, it became clear that tradespeople such as blacksmiths, tailors, carpenters, dressmakers, nurses, and teachers, along with labourers in factories, roads, and mills, were overwhelmingly the children of working farmers. Likewise, the paper claimed, many farm labourers came from the same communities as urban workers. Their lives were intertwined: they worked side by side, socialised at local gatherings, and faced the same economic pressures. Efforts had long been made to foster artificial divisions. Labels such as "ordinary worker" or "respectable farmer" were used to imply social distinctions that did not exist in practice. These phrases, repeated often, served to isolate the working classes from one another. Yet they had largely failed. The common experiences and shared hardships of daily life had revealed the reality: workers and working farmers were fundamentally united by their conditions.

The plight of the Irish small farmer, the paper remarked, had become increasingly dire. Reports described farmers going hungry on market days, too ashamed to walk the main street of their own towns for fear of encountering shopkeepers to whom they owed money. The economic pressures had intensified. Farmers were unable to sell their wool, while their pigs fetched just over two pence per pound. Meanwhile, imported bacon filled the shelves of local stores, underselling domestic produce. This situation led to paradoxical and tragic realities: while prices for basic goods rose, farmers found it difficult to afford sufficient food for their families. Meat had become a rarity in their homes, and many children were sent to school underfed and poorly clothed. Despite this, the Irish State continued to collect rents, often on behalf of absentee English landlords - a bitter reminder of Ireland's colonial legacy. '*An Phoblacht*' emphasised that it was not enough for workers and farmers to simply recognise their suffering - they needed to understand its root causes. The role of Saor Éire, therefore, was to raise political consciousness and offer a path forward. Working farmers in particular

needed to be made fully aware of their condition and the structural injustices underpinning it. Though they felt their hardship daily, it had to be named and understood before it could be addressed. Saor Éire presented itself as the remedy - a political movement aimed at uniting the oppressed classes, exposing the failures of capitalism, and organising for meaningful change. Unity, education, and mobilisation were key. The call at that time was for every worker in Ireland to become familiar with Saor Éire's aims, and to join the collective struggle for a new, just republic.[206]

In an explosive feature titled 'IRA and Saor Éire Aim to Overthrow State,' the '*Connacht Sentinel*' reported on a statement from the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Ireland, issued during their October meeting in Maynooth, that was read out at Masses across the country. The bishops expressed grave concern over what they described as a growing campaign of revolution and communism which, if left unchecked, they warned would lead to Ireland's ruin-both spiritual and material. The statement asserted that a militarist society was actively operating within Ireland, openly aiming to overthrow the State by force of arms. According to the Hierarchy, this group-understood to refer to the I.R.A.-had assumed the right to intimidate public officials and jurymen, silence citizens through fear, and even resort to taking lives. The bishops declared such actions and principles to be wholly contrary to God's law and explicitly condemned by the Catholic Church. They added that no patriotic motive could justify such bloodshed.

While emphasising that their statement was concerned solely with the religious and moral dimensions of the situation, the Hierarchy clarified that they did not intend to issue judgments on matters of political policy per se. Such matters, they stated, were for the people as a whole to decide through democratic means. The bishops further stressed that the existing government in the Saorstát had been democratically elected by the people. Regardless of one's view of its policies, they said, the government remained the only

[206] *An Phoblacht 17/10/1931*

legitimate civil authority. If a majority of the electorate wished to change the government, they could do so at the ballot box. However, no group or individual had the right to challenge the State through force, intimidation, or the establishment of parallel structures.

In addition to the I.R.A., the statement also addressed the emergence of a new group, Saor Éire, which the bishops claimed was openly communistic in its goals. They referred to press reports of Saor Éire's published programme, which they claimed sought to mobilise workers and small farmers behind a revolutionary agenda to establish a communist state. The bishops warned that such an agenda aimed to impose on Ireland the same godless regime found in Soviet Russia and, increasingly, in Spain. The statement alleged that Saor Éire, guided by Bolshevik ideology, had set out to establish "working peasant clubs" or "cells" in both rural and urban areas. Although these units appeared to promote nationalism and concern for the welfare of farmers and labourers, the Hierarchy contended that their true purpose was to spread communist ideology and foment social upheaval through organised defiance of state authority. The bishops concluded by warning that if the efforts of these revolutionary movements succeeded, Ireland risked the loss of its cherished heritage-its history, its religion, and its national identity.[207]

Only a few days later, as '*An Phoblacht*' went to press, it was officially confirmed that a number of political and workers' organisations had been banned by the Free State Government. Membership in any of the named groups was now deemed unlawful under the newly enacted legislation. The list of proscribed organisations included those of Saor Éire, Fianna Éireann, the Friends of Soviet Russia, the Workers' Defence Corps, the Workers' Revolutionary Party (Ireland), and the Irish Working Farmers' Committees. Also banned were the Irish Republican Army, Cumann na mBán, the Irish Labour Defence League, the Women Prisoners' Defence League, the Irish Tribute League, and the Workers' Research Bureau. In addition to these sweeping bans, the

[207] *Connacht Sentinel 20/10/1931*

Government had established military courts and appointed five judges to preside over them. The final ratification of the Act, under which these measures were being implemented, had received the assent of the British monarch, as communicated through the Governor-General. These developments represented a significant escalation in the repression of political dissent and working-class organisation in Ireland, and were widely seen as an effort to suppress not only republican activism but also socialist and labour movements gaining traction across the country.[208]

By November, Mary MacSwiney had changed her stance on Saor Éire, because she believed that it wished to divide Irish society on a "class basis." Responding in an issue of '*The Irish Workers' Voice*,' the publication firmly rejected the claim that organisations such as Saor Éire were responsible for introducing class divisions in Ireland. Believing that she had misinterpreted its aims, the editorial argued that these divisions had long existed - well before the formation of Saor Éire or even Sinn Féin. To underscore its point, the article cited the American socialist writer Jack London, who famously maintained that the class struggle was not an invention of revolutionaries, but rather a consequence of social development. Just as Isaac Newton had explained the law of gravitation without creating it, so too did hardline socialists merely interpret the nature of the economic and social forces at play. The opinion piece stressed that as long as capitalism endured, class divisions would remain an inherent feature of society. The Communist position, it argued, was to work towards the complete abolition of the capitalist class and the establishment of a workers' state. This transition was deemed essential for the eventual elimination of all class distinctions and the introduction of a truly egalitarian society. The '*Voice*' made clear that, in its opinion, explaining the class struggle should not be confused with causing it, and reiterated its belief that meaningful social

[208] *An Phoblacht 24/10/1931*

change required the dismantling of the capitalist system itself.[209]

On the same day, '*An Phoblacht*' had reported that the Government of the Six-County statelet had quickly followed the lead of its counterpart in the Twenty-Six Counties, by extending its repressive measures. The Irish Republican Army and Saor Éire had subsequently been banned across all thirty-two counties-effectively throughout the entirety of Ireland. This move was described as unprecedented. For the first time, it was officially acknowledged that these organisations had a presence across both jurisdictions on the island. The ban, the paper noted, served not only as a political measure, but also as a stark warning to all those who continued to defy what it termed the laws of partitionist rule. The editorial characterised the action as a clear sign of co-ordinated efforts between both regimes to suppress revolutionary and republican movements, and as a signal that political dissent, especially of a radical or anti-capitalist nature, would be met with legal sanctions and increased surveillance.

The paper also noted in this edition that '*The Belfast Gazette*' published a formal order issued by Sir Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs in the Six Counties, which officially declared Saor Éire to be an unlawful organisation. The proscription formed part of a wider campaign of repression aimed at curtailing radical and republican activity throughout the North. In addition to the ban, a second order was issued prohibiting any person-other than members of the police-from participating in any exercises, drills, movements, or militaristic actions of any kind, or from being involved in organising or promoting such activities. According to the views of '*An Phoblacht*,' the order was clearly intended to suppress not only the operations of Saor Éire and the IRA but also to intimidate the broader working-class and republican communities engaged in political organising. These measures, they believed, underscored the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Stormont regime, which relied on

[209] *The Irish Workers' Voice 7/11/1931*

coercive legislation to silence opposition, and preserve the political and social status quo.[210]

Later, a December 1931 issue of the '*Republican File*' outlined that numerous individuals had either been charged with, or convicted of, various criminal offences involving membership of proscribed organisations, such as the IRA and Saor Éire.[211]

In the New Year of 1932, the '*Republican File*' reported that on December 2, 1931, the New York State Directorate of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (A.A.R.I.R.) issued a formal protest against the actions of the Irish Free State, following the imprisonment and planned deportation of John Mulgrew, an American citizen. In a letter addressed to U.S. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, the State President of the A.A.R.I.R., Robert F. Mahony, expressed strong concern over reports that Mulgrew had been sentenced to six months of hard labour by a Military Tribunal in Ireland. The sentence was reportedly to be followed by deportation, stemming from allegations that Mulgrew was a member of Saor Éire - a socialist republican organisation that had recently been declared unlawful under the Constitution (Amendment) (No. 17) Act. According to press accounts referenced in the letter, no defence had been presented on Mulgrew's behalf during the trial. The A.A.R.I.R. condemned the proceedings as unjust and called upon the U.S. State Department to launch an investigation into the circumstances of the arrest, trial, and conviction. The organisation argued that the United States government bore a responsibility to defend the rights of its citizens abroad, warning that similar incidents could affect other American nationals travelling in or residing within the Irish Free State. The letter requested that the Department inform the Association of any steps taken and the outcome of the investigation. This protest occurred during a broader period of political repression in the Irish Free State. In 1931, the

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[210] *An Phoblacht 7/11/1931*

[211] *Republican File 12/12/1931*

government enacted sweeping legislation aimed at suppressing revolutionary and anti-state movements. Saor Éire, along with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and several left-wing organisations, had been proscribed. The state's crackdown, which included the use of military tribunals and censorship, was widely criticised by international observers and civil liberties groups. The case of John Mulgrew thus became a notable example of the tensions between state security measures and individual rights during this turbulent era in Irish political history.[212]

Not long later, the '*Republican File*' reported that in a landmark case before the Military Tribunal at Collins Barracks, Dublin, Miss Sheila Humphries became the first woman to be tried by the court under the emergency legislation of the Irish Free State. Charged with multiple offences related to her membership in illegal republican organisations, Humphries refused to recognise the legitimacy of the proceedings, offering a defiant political statement in both Irish and English. Humphries faced five counts, including possession of documents linked to Cumann na mBán and Saor Éire-both recently declared unlawful. The evidence cited included propaganda materials, organisational rules, and pamphlets bearing anti-British and revolutionary messages. These had been recovered during police searches at her residence, 36 Ailesbury Road. The charges against her were as follows:

- Possession of Cumann na mBán documents, including notepaper and correspondence to Catholic bishops.
- Occupation of premises containing further materials such as printed rules, pamphlets titled "To Foreigners Visiting Our Country," "Boycott British Goods," and documents from the "Easter Lily Committee."
- Possession of materials associated with Saor Éire, including a political resolution draft and a copy of the organisation's constitution.
- Membership in Cumann na mBán.

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[212] *Republican File 2/1/1932*

- Membership in Saor Éire.

Upon the reading of the charges, Humphries refused to enter a plea. She delivered her protest in Irish, later switching to English so her position would be clearly understood. She declared the tribunal a “self-appointed clique of the British Army of Occupation” and denounced the entire process as a “spectacular comedy.”

Despite being repeatedly instructed by the President of the Tribunal to remain silent or risk the case proceeding in her absence, Humphries continued to interject during the proceedings. When a political resolution linked to Saor Éire was referenced, she encouraged the court to read it aloud, describing it as a “splendid indictment of British rule in this country.” Detective-Sergeant Byrne testified that on December 17th, he had searched Humphries’ residence and found documents bearing the heading of Cumann na mBán. During the search, Humphries declared openly, “To save you trouble, I will acknowledge that I am a member of Cumann na mBán and Saor Éire.” Further testimony from Detective Officer Rice confirmed the discovery of pamphlets and documents promoting economic resistance and revolutionary ideas. These included "Boycott British Goods", material intended for foreign visitors, and Cumann na mBán notepaper listing the address "27 Dawson Street, Dublin." He also found a copy of An Phoblacht, along with Saor Éire’s constitution, which advocated for the overthrow of British imperialism and Irish capitalism. Humphries endorsed the contents of these documents during the hearing, exclaiming, “Hear, hear!” and stating she wished more people in Ireland could read them.

When invited to speak in her defence, Humphries again rejected the court’s authority. “I am charged with being a member of Cumann na mBán, and I admit it,” she said. “You are very foolish to try and suppress that organisation, for we thrive on suppression. I am also a member of Saor Éire because I see in it the surest and most effective way of securing the only thing worth fighting for-the national, economic and political freedom of the country.” The

President of the Tribunal reminded her that the court was not a political platform. “Indeed, I know it is more like a spectacular comedy than anything else,” she replied. At the conclusion of the evidence, the President stated that the court’s verdict would be announced at a later stage.[213]

During the same period, on a day emblematic of the Irish Free State's crackdown on republican dissent, Frank Ryan, editor of the suppressed republican weekly ‘*An Phoblacht*,’ was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Military Tribunal at Collins Barracks, Dublin, for contempt of court. A resident of Elm Park Terrace, Ranelagh, Ryan had been brought before the tribunal on multiple charges, all stemming from his alleged connections to proscribed organisations and his refusal to cooperate with Free State authorities. The charges laid against him were as follows:

- Membership of an unlawful association, specifically Óglaigh na hÉireann (the Irish Republican Army).
- Refusal to disclose information in his possession regarding whether he had control of any arms, ammunition, or documents linked to an unlawful organisation, despite formal demands made by Sergeant James Hughes.
- Refusal to provide information concerning any association he may have had with the I.R.A., Saor Éire, and the Workers' Revolutionary Party-each declared illegal under existing emergency legislation.

According to the ‘*Irish Worker*,’ Ryan, already known for his hard-line republican views and editorial leadership at ‘*An Phoblacht*,’ maintained a defiant stance during these proceedings. His refusal to answer questions or assist the authorities led directly to the contempt charge that ultimately secured his sentence. The case was part of a broader series of prosecutions during the early 1930s, when the Free State Government employed military tribunals to quell the

[213] *Republican File 23/1/1932*

perceived revolutionary threats posed by both militant republicans and their political affiliates.[214]

In early March, the '*Republican File*' reported that, speaking at Tubbercurry, Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenney, then Minister for Justice, declared that the Free State Government had effectively "closed the trap" on what he referred to as the "so-called" I.R.A. and Saor Éire. He accused both organisations of leading young Irish men not only into physical danger, but also towards moral and spiritual ruin. Fitzgerald-Kenney referred specifically to the Christmas period of 1930, when, according to a careful computation by the Civic Guards, approximately 5,000 men were believed to be actively involved in Óglaigh na hÉireann (IRA), engaging in illegal drilling and paramilitary activities. These figures had coincided with the enactment of the Constitution (Amendment No. 17) Act, a legislative measure introduced to suppress subversive activities and allow for trial by military tribunal in cases involving proscribed organisations. Despite the Government's legislative and policing efforts, Fitzgerald-Kenney acknowledged that the number of active participants had grown by "many thousands" in the months following the act's passage. This rise in militant republican activity, he argued, justified the State's increasingly harsh approach to organisations it considered threats to public order and national stability.[215]

A March 1932 reflection by '*An Phoblacht*' remarked that by the autumn of 1931, opponents of Irish republicanism had grown increasingly alarmed. A direct political or military confrontation with the underground Volunteer Government-a euphemism often used for the Irish Republican Army-would have been deeply unpopular among the broader population. Instead, the critics of republicanism sought alternative means of undermining the movement. Their opportunity came with the launch of Saor Éire, a radical organisation that quickly gained traction among individuals favouring a revolutionary

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[214] *The Irish Worker 23/1/1932*

[215] *Republican File 5/3/1932*

approach to the national question. The programme of Saor Éire, the paper claimed, struck a chord with a segment of the Irish population that was disillusioned with both British imperialism and the socio-economic conditions in the Free State. It addressed fundamental issues: chronic poverty, rural depopulation, and emigration, and laid bare the mechanisms through which the Irish working class was, in its view, exploited and held in subjugation. Its unapologetically radical message provided a compelling critique of existing social and economic structures.

It asserted that, as Saor Éire's ideas gained ground, elements of the State and Church began to raise alarm. It was claimed that the very foundations of the Irish State were under threat, and that religion in Ireland itself stood on a precipice. The spectre of Bolshevism - portrayed as the sworn enemy of religion - was invoked with renewed vigour. The example of the Spanish Revolution served as a nearby and ominous warning. Unlike distant Russia, Spain was a Catholic country, and its social upheaval seemed to some a more immediate and plausible analogue for what might come to pass in Ireland. Calls were made for both coercion and prayer, with the aim of halting the advance of what were described as "Irish Bolsheviks." The paper noted that the Free State's response was swift and severe. Republican homes were raided day and night. Men were arrested on vague suspicions - often while returning from work or heading out for a meal. Those detained were denied normal legal protections and, in many cases, even communication with family and friends. Suspects were dragged from their homes, interrogated, detained without trial, and fingerprinted. The military prison at Arbour Hill took on a sinister reputation, likened by some republicans to a "model Siberia," cold and austere, where prisoners endured conditions seen as deliberately punitive. Although the government publicly denounced Soviet methods, critics noted that it seemed willing to adopt similar tactics-mass surveillance, arbitrary detention, suppression of dissent-in pursuit of its own political goals.

In this climate of repression, '*An Phoblacht*' remarked that Republicans were called upon to stand firm, and many did so, declaring openly their continued commitment to the ideals of national, social, and political liberation. The issue caused division within the Catholic Church. While some bishops issued pastoral letters condemning republicanism and communism alike, the paper claimed that many Catholic republicans remained steadfast in their faith, viewing such pronouncements as politically motivated, rather than spiritually authoritative-just as they had during the Civil War period of 1922–23.

A review of the Coercion Act's operation revealed limited effectiveness. In the early stages, civilians previously arrested by the Gardaí and brought before the courts-such as the Gilmore brothers, whose trial had ended in a hung jury-were transferred into military custody. Several arrests followed in Kerry, Limerick, Clare, and Dublin, with numerous trials and sentences imposed by military tribunals. In some cases, prisoners renounced their affiliations, though most remained defiant. It was pointed out that, in Co. Mayo, particularly in the Achill districts, republican activity remained especially vigorous. John Mulgrew, an American citizen and member of Saor Éire, became the first high-profile case under the new regime, receiving a prison sentence. Brian Corrigan was also convicted. In this region, the clergy were notably cooperative with the authorities, offering assistance in efforts to quell republican agitation.[216]

The following week, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on a colossal meeting of IRA activists in Dublin. Seán McGuinness, former Teachta Dála (T.D.) for Co. Offaly, expressed deep gratitude to the citizens of the capital for the warm welcome extended to him and his fellow prisoners. The demonstration of support, he declared, was both heartening and encouraging for those who had endured imprisonment for their beliefs. McGuinness saw the gesture not merely as a personal honour, but as an endorsement of the cause to which he and his comrades had dedicated themselves-a cause, he

[216] *An Phoblacht 12/3/1932*

emphasised, that remained unfinished. He welcomed the recent change of government, viewing it as a potential turning point in the Irish struggle for full independence. It was now the duty, he insisted, of all decent Irish men and women to unite and eradicate the final remnants of British imperialism, regardless of the cost. The new administration, he suggested, was uniquely positioned to demonstrate its sincerity by advancing the cause of Irish freedom. Every such step, he maintained, would receive the unwavering support of patriotic citizens-and, crucially, of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) itself. McGuinness reminded his audience that his release from prison, and that of his comrades, had only been made possible by the relentless and selfless efforts of republicans outside the prison walls. He paid particular tribute to the Dublin Brigade, who had continued the fight during his internment, and to the women of Cumann na mBán, whose loyalty and courage had not wavered.

McGuinness turned to the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland at that time, particularly their support for the Coercion Act, which had facilitated sweeping repressive powers against republicans. He was unsurprised, he said, when in October 1931, the bishops had issued a pastoral letter effectively endorsing the measure. That same letter had been used to justify the denial of spiritual assistance to him while in Mountjoy Prison. A chaplain had demanded that he renounce his membership of both the IRA and Saor Éire in exchange for pastoral care-a demand he resolutely refused. He had not abandoned his faith, he said, but neither had he left the Church. Rather, the Church had withdrawn from him on political grounds. He called upon the Papal Nuncio to intervene and halt what he described as a misuse of the confessional for political purposes. This, he argued, was not a new development but part of a long-standing policy of interference, traceable back to the English invasion of Ireland. In defending Saor Éire, McGuinness argued that its programme contained the only viable solution to Ireland's enduring economic ills-problems which, in his view, would never be resolved through parliamentary reforms alone.

Fellow republican Peadar O'Donnell spoke alongside McGuinness, offering a searing indictment of the conditions faced by republican prisoners in Arbour Hill, which he described as involving “unspeakable torture.” The men imprisoned there, O’Donnell said, were fighting to sever the British connection once and for all, and the Irish people had shown that they stood with them. He declared that the IRA represented not merely a military force, but a mobilising power for Ireland’s working class, committed to the realisation of a free Irish republic. While he welcomed the fall of what he called the “murder government,” O'Donnell insisted that its members must be permanently excluded from public life. They were, he warned, unfit to occupy any republican platform in future. Nonetheless, he struck an optimistic note. The road ahead, though still difficult, would likely be shorter and perhaps less harsh. O’Donnell was especially encouraged by the emerging youth movement-a new generation of Irish men and women committed to the republican cause. It was they, he concluded, who would accomplish great things for Ireland’s future.

Among those who addressed the gathered crowd in Dublin was Thomas O'Dálaigh, representing Clan na nGael in America. He declared that he was proud to stand on the platform in solidarity with the recently released Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners. Speaking on behalf of Clan na nGael, O'Dálaigh reaffirmed the organisation’s unwavering commitment to the physical force tradition of Irish republicanism. He reminded the audience that Clan na nGael had supported the 1916 Easter Rising, had stood with the movement throughout the years 1918 to 1920, and had remained loyal following what he termed “the Great Betrayal” of 1922 - a reference to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. That betrayal, he asserted, had not altered the organisation's principles. Clan na nGael continued to stand shoulder to shoulder with Irish republicans and would do so until full freedom was achieved. Quoting the famous maxim, “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace,” O'Dálaigh emphasised that Ireland’s national freedom remained unrealised. The journey ahead might still be long, he acknowledged, but so long as the nation produced men such

as those who had recently endured imprisonment, the cause of Irish freedom would never falter. He appealed directly to the citizens of Dublin to stand firm in support of the IRA as it continued its campaign for independence. The prisoners, O'Dálaigh said, had been incarcerated not because they committed crimes, but because they had refused to accept the Treaty. It would have been far easier, he suggested, had they chosen to compromise their beliefs and submit-but they had not. They were not slaves, and they would never accept the legitimacy of the Treaty. This refusal was, in his eyes, the mark of their integrity and the justification for their continued struggle. He then addressed the broader responsibilities of the Irish people, particularly those in Dublin. The crowd's show of support for the prisoners that day, he insisted, must be matched by future actions. The citizens must ensure that no more Irish men or women would be made political prisoners for standing by the Republic. They must offer not just moral support, but active commitment to the republican cause, especially to the soldiers of the IRA. In particular, O'Dálaigh praised the role of women in the movement, singling out Cumann na mBán for their constancy in times both good and bad. But he warned against leaving such vital work to a committed few. The struggle, he said, required a collective, final effort to break the British connection once and for all. Reflecting on the difficult decade that had passed, O'Dálaigh mourned the emigration of some of Ireland's best and brightest, forced abroad by poverty and lack of opportunity. This tragedy, he believed, could be reversed if the Irish people stood behind the IRA and lent their support to Saor Éire, which he viewed as key to the development of a new economic model for an independent Ireland.In conclusion, he assured the people of Dublin that Clan na nGael would remain a steadfast ally. From across the Atlantic, the organisation would continue to support those working to sever the last ties of British rule, and help to build an Ireland worthy of the sacrifices made in its name. Maud Gonne MacBride also addressed the meeting.[217]

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[217] *An Phoblacht 19/3/1932*

It did not take long for hardline Republicans to dislike Fianna Fáil. In a sharply worded editorial, '*An Phoblacht*' offered a critical republican perspective on the early policies of the newly elected De Valera Government in 1932. The commentary centred on the Irish Free State's negotiations with the British Crown Government regarding two highly contentious issues: the Land Annuities and the Oath of Allegiance. While Taoiseach Éamon de Valera insisted these were the only real obstacles to full Irish-British friendship, '*An Phoblacht*' argued that far more fundamental questions of sovereignty and class justice remained unresolved. The British "National" Government and the De Valera administration were then engaged in a series of formal exchanges concerning the annuities and the constitutional oath. Though De Valera's government had pledged to abolish both, republicans remained sceptical. While Fianna Fáil made its opening moves-releasing republican prisoners, suspending the Cosgrave-era Coercion Act, and refusing further annuity payments to Great Britain-'*An Phoblacht*' questioned the depth of these reforms and warned that the core imperial structure remained intact.

"We have had a change of Government as if nothing had happened," De Valera told the Dáil on 15 March 1932. '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' agreed with the sentiment, but not with the implied optimism. The editorial suggested that only the personnel of government had changed-not its fundamental loyalties. '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' further argued that Fianna Fáil's policies were a continuation of those pursued by Cosgrave's Cumann na nGaedheal. It accused both parties of forming a united front against the working class and small farmers, asserting that De Valera's government was simply pursuing the same imperial objectives by less overtly coercive means. The editorial noted that while Fianna Fáil sought to remove the Oath and renegotiate financial terms with Britain, these actions amounted to a new treaty rather than a break from the old. It characterised the removal of the Oath as a substitute coercion act, designed to buy the silence of republican and working-class opposition with minor constitutional concessions and a one-time saving of £3,000,000 in annuities. From the perspective of '*The Irish*

Workers' Voice,' De Valera's approach had sought accommodation with the British Empire, not confrontation. This was, the editorial argued, an affront to the Republican ideal of total independence as declared in the 1916 Proclamation.

The editorial highlighted contrasting responses from within the broader republican movement. The IRA, in its Easter statement that year, reiterated its commitment to the full realisation of the 1916 Proclamation, and sought to "rally the mass of the Irish people to take their stand again as free citizens of an Irish Republic." At the same time, the editorial accused Saor Éire-the socialist republican group aligned with militant republicanism-of muddling its position, refusing to confront the Fianna Fáil government directly, despite passing a clear resolution in September 1931 condemning state collaboration with imperialism. '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' , however, continued to express support for economic self-sufficiency, applauding the government's move to impose a 33% tariff on agricultural machinery imports, part of an apparent strategy to foster local industry. Yet even these economic measures, the paper warned, could be part of a supposedly bourgeois nationalist strategy that left the working class behind. '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' concluded that the Fianna Fáil administration shared the same essential aims as its predecessor: to protect Irish capitalism, suppress working-class dissent, and maintain a constitutional relationship with the British Empire. The policies of wage suppression, cuts to teachers' and civil servants' salaries, and the absence of insurance relief for the unemployed were all cited as evidence of this continuity. Small farmers, it noted bitterly, would see no benefit from the withheld annuities. In sum, the editorial portrayed De Valera's government as another face of imperial policy, accusing it of using the trust of the Irish people to entrench a new political order that remained fundamentally tied to British interests - at the expense of workers, republicans, and the legacy of 1916.[218]

[218] *The Irish Workers' Voice 9/4/1932*

Later in April, '*An Phoblacht*' reprinted an extract from Saor Éire's publication '*An Indictment of Capitalism and Parliamentary Parties in Ireland*.' The text asserted that no way out of the crisis that had existed since 1929 was indicated. The working farmers, it claimed, were not told that their economy could not stand up to the competition of the splendidly equipped large-scale farms, any more than the handloom could resist the Yorkshire mills. They were not told that the whole economy had to be reorganised so that the advantages of modern technology would be made available to groups of working farmers or clustered wage earners.

Additionally, the piece insists that they were not told that they had to get rid of oppressive rents and heavy interest charges; that they had to obtain their industrial products at prices that would close the gap between the value of their produce and the cost of their boots, clothes, and other manufactured goods. It adds that they were not informed that this could only be achieved when agriculture was organised by those who worked in it, with the co-operation of the State, and a balanced economy established between agriculture and industrial production. Likewise, they were not notified that under the system at the time, improvements in machinery and techniques which had increased output, would add to unemployment, whereas such improvements should have served to shorten the working day and improve the general standard of well-being. Furthermore, no indication was supposedly made to them that working farmers and wage earners had to seize from the exploiters the powers they held and make these powers freely available for the welfare of the masses. In short, they were not told that the inhuman and degrading social system had to be destroyed; that capitalist exploitation and chaotic production for private profit had to be abolished, and a new, planned economy organised.[219]

In an '*An Phoblacht*' feature from May 1932, Sean O'Faolain expressed that a book he had penned had been written out of a feeling of disillusionment. He had been a Volunteer from 1918 to 1924, and he rejected the idea that he had either

[219] *An Phoblacht 23/4/1932*

"strayed" into the movement or "was not one" with his comrades. To him, those six years had been the finest of his life, due to the companionship of men united by an honourable enthusiasm for the cause of freedom. However, he questioned what the result of those years had been for Ireland. He believed that in many respects the outcome had been good, but in many others, very wretched. Ireland had gained the liberty to fashion an educational system of its own, but its social system had only been superficially altered. Capitalist domination and snobbery had been replaced by bourgeois domination and snobbery. Culturally, Ireland had backed the Gaelic ideal for all it was worth - though, in his view, with very little understanding of what the Gaelic State had truly meant in Ireland. He asked what liberty - such as had been achieved - had really meant for the people. Before any Irishman criticised his book or others like it, he urged them to consider that question.

O'Faolain argued that liberty surely meant the right of every individual to live as complete and full a life as possible, according to their own ideals. If it did not, then liberty meant nothing at all to him. He believed that every nationalist should remember that the struggle against British imperialism had only been against the first and most potent enemy of liberty - not the last. Among the most extreme and enthusiastic nationalists of his day, he observed men who had so little conception of tolerance that they risked becoming little tyrants. He stated that much of modern Irish nationalism was little more than a cover for bigotry and intolerant jingoism. To be a nationalist, or Republican, meant only that a man still believed British influences were the greatest obstacle to liberty. While holding this belief, he warned, nationalists often ignored far worse obstacles closer to home. Reflecting on the old Sinn Féin days, O'Faolain felt that the leaders of those days had had little or no idea of what to do with their power once they gained it. They lacked a realistic economic policy and had only a vague cultural ideal - in short, no true philosophy of freedom. While not enthusiastic about the ideals of Saor Éire, he acknowledged it as an attempt to formulate a philosophy of freedom along more realist lines. However, he had distrusted the full-blown

Communist idea, viewing it as an enemy to individual liberty. He pointed out that in Russia, there was a definite antagonism to freedom of religious worship, and even the literary development of individuals was restricted - with the works of authors like Dostoevsky being bowdlerised, and others like Turgenev only permitted surreptitiously. O'Faolain took his stand firmly on the rights of the individual. Though an individual was only one man and had to fit into the State, he believed making a person a mere cipher in a State machine was as abominable as allowing a capitalist or dictator to dominate it. He noted that the problem of balancing the one and the many was ancient, dating back to Plato, and had long challenged the greatest minds of Europe.[220]

In July, an editorial by the pro-Treaty aligned '*United Irishman*' newspaper expressed strong criticism of the anti-Treaty Party leaders and spokesmen, accusing them of missing the chance over the previous decade to acknowledge and support those who had accepted the Treaty and worked, despite opposition, to build a respectable Irish State. It argued that President de Valera and his colleagues had deprived the Irish people, both at home and abroad, of the honour due to the 1921 victory by consistently undermining the Saorstát through misleading propaganda. The piece noted that even though de Valera recently admitted that some progress had been made since 1921-something he had previously failed to foresee-Ireland had nonetheless suffered greatly because of his earlier inability to anticipate the future. On the same day de Valera publicly admitted to mishandling the 1922 situation, the writer encountered a clear example of the kind of supposed dishonest anti-Treaty propaganda that had, over the years, poisoned the minds of many Irish people abroad against the State, and those responsible for its progress. The editorial named Mr. Hugh Blackham, a journalist writing under the Gaelic pseudonym Aodh de Blacam, who contributed to an Australian Catholic weekly called '*The Advocate*.' It described Blackham's recent "Irish Letter" as a piece that exaggerated events in Ireland,

[220] *An Phoblacht 14/5/1932*

portraying de Valera's election as leader of the Free State Executive as a moment of unanimous national acclaim - a portrayal the editorial dismissed as largely untrue and intended to mislead audiences far from Ireland. The opinion piece went on to describe how, soon after forming his government, de Valera's Ministers for Defence and Justice reportedly ordered political prisoners-including members of organisations like Saor Éire and the IRA, as well as "other" Communist groups condemned by the Irish Catholic hierarchy-to be granted political status and eventual release. The editorial implied this was part of a broader effort by anti-Treaty forces to undermine the legitimacy of the Irish State and misrepresent the advances it had made.[221]

In another fiery editorial, this time from September 1932, the '*United Irishman*' claimed that the impending disbandment of the Garda Síochána's Detective Branch (often referred to as the "C.I.D.") was not merely an administrative decision but the result of pressure from Saor Éire and, by implication, the I.R.A. and Fianna Fáil. The article asserted that the move was a textbook tactic of Communist influence-disabling the country's internal security force to clear the way for unrest and terrorism. The editorial alleged that support for disbandment came almost exclusively from Fianna Fáil, the I.R.A., and the Communist Party, with few others backing the proposal. Fianna Fáil, it claimed, had been particularly hostile to the Detective Branch, motivated by long-standing animosity going back to the Civil War period when its members were "irregulars" on the receiving end of C.I.D. operations. The article reminded readers that the Detective Branch had played a key role in suppressing the I.R.A., capturing internal documents and foiling illegal activities, including the incident in which Mr. Thomas Derrig-now a government minister-was wounded.

According to the '*United Irishman*,' the campaign to disband the unit gained momentum through politicised coverage in The '*Irish Press*,' Fianna Fáil's party newspaper, which it accused of slander and of engaging in libellous attacks so

[221] *United Irishman 9/7/1932*

egregious that legal action was required. The editorial dismissed Fianna Fáil's stated concerns about poor discipline in the Detective Branch, claiming that such criticisms were simply a smokescreen to remove a force that hindered the party's radical allies. The piece warned that the disbandment would remove a crucial line of defence against anarchy. It recalled the dire crime wave that led to the unit's formation-bank robberies, armed assaults, and open violence in Dublin-and argued that only through the tireless efforts of the detectives was order restored. With their removal, the editorial predicted a resurgence of similar lawlessness, with violent groups emboldened by the State's retreat.

The editorial went so far as to accuse the government of bending to Communist influence, citing the '*Irish Worker's Voice*'-a Communist publication adorned with Soviet imagery-as proof of ideological co-ordination between Irish Republican radicals and Moscow. It implied that de Valera was acting like a weak Kerensky figure, unable or unwilling to resist this pressure. In its conclusion, the editorial challenged Labour and moderate political forces to clarify where they stood. It questioned whether Labour's support for social reform extended to dismantling public safety institutions, and sarcastically referenced past moments when Labour politicians, then at odds with figures like Jim Larkin (by this time a pariah), had relied on police support. Now, it suggested, the same politicians were turning a blind eye to the consequences of their new alliances. Ultimately, the '*United Irishman*' warned that the disbandment of the Detective Branch was not a reform but a dangerous concession to chaos, dressed up in the language of civil liberties and progress. It saw the move as one more step toward disorder, taken in the name of an idealised "Republic" that, it argued, masked darker agendas.[222]

In an October 1932 edition of '*An Phoblacht*,' Muiris Ó Muircheartaidh offered a forceful response to an earlier article concerning the future of small farmers in Ireland. He argued that the only viable and just solution to the hardship

[222] *United Irishman 10/9/1932*

faced by working farmers and wage earners lay in adhering to the principles of a Workers' Republic - those first laid down by James Connolly and upheld by both Saor Éire and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). According to the writer, the struggle for Irish freedom is inseparable from the struggle of the working classes to overthrow the exploitative system that keeps them in poverty. True national liberation, he asserted, would only be realised through a united and independent Irish Republic shaped by the working people themselves.

Ó Muircheartaidh was critical of Fianna Fáil, contending that the party was incapable of leading this revolutionary transformation. He warned that once in government, Fianna Fáil would be absorbed by the very system it claims to oppose, ultimately working against the interests of small farmers, labourers, and rural communities. Central to his vision was the immediate destruction of the remnants of feudalism and economic exploitation in Ireland. He called for the breakup of large ranches and demesnes, and the abolition of exclusive game and fishing rights still held by a privileged few-rights enforced by gamekeepers and bailiffs to the exclusion of local people. These, he argued, should be the first targets of a truly National Government committed to social justice.

He further expressed frustration at the silence of public figures and writers when it came to the needs of impoverished farmers and fishermen, especially those in the Gaeltacht. For Ó Muircheartaidh, the time for passivity had passed. Now was the moment, he declared, to awaken the masses, give full expression to their voices, and set about the overthrow of capitalism. He concluded with a rallying cry for revolutionary change: "On to the Workers' Republic!"[223]

In a sharply-worded editorial from October 1932, the '*United Irishman*' once again voiced alarm over what it described as the growing threat of communism in Ireland, claiming that the IRA and associated organisations were actively working

[223] *An Phoblacht 8/10/1932*

to subvert the Irish state and align it with international revolutionary movements. The editorial opened by criticising a recent public lecture delivered in Sligo by Frank Ryan, editor of '*An Phoblacht*' and prominent IRA member, where he compared the IRA's right to drill and arm in 1932 to that of the Irish Volunteers in 1914. Ryan called on his audience to "act today in preparation for tomorrow," suggesting, in the eyes of the editorialist, a veiled call to arms. Also present at the event were Alderman J. Lynch and the Rev. Michael O'Flanagan, a controversial figure known for challenging clerical influence, and recently tasked by the Fianna Fáil government with writing school histories.

The paper also quoted a speech by leading Republican figure George Gilmore, who warned against the illusion that national independence alone would solve Ireland's problems. Instead, Gilmore stressed the importance of defining and actively pursuing the type of republic that should be established-one that went beyond mere sovereignty. To the '*United Irishman*,' this rhetoric underscored what it saw as a dangerous ideological agenda. The editorial claimed the IRA was not just an isolated paramilitary force, but the leading component of a broader web of revolutionary groups aligned with international communism. Citing organisations such as the Anti-Imperialist League, the Friends of Soviet Russia, the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, and what they regarded as the discredited Saor Éire, it warned that these movements shared leadership and goals rooted in the Third International (Comintern).

The piece also mentioned the so-called "Boycott League" as another group serving what it characterised as a communist training ground, noting its confrontational tactics and ideological alignment. The editorial also accused such organisations of hiding their real aims behind nationalist slogans, and it urged the Irish public to "strip off the false trappings of nationalism" and recognise what it believed to be the true intention: the establishment of a Soviet-style regime in Ireland. Referring to reports of IRA gun practice near Dublin and increased visible activity, the '*United Irishman*' argued that this was not harmless posturing, but

preparation for revolutionary action. The paper asserted that the IRA's object was "to impose on us here a Soviet regime, with all power and the complete control of all activity in the hands of the few whom the upheaval would throw up on top." It concluded by asserting that Ireland must confront and reject this "menace" before it destabilised the hard-won Irish state.[224]

In a critical reflection published in '*An Phoblacht*,' a commentator argued that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) had, at one point, demonstrated its historical effectiveness by recognising that any serious struggle for an independent Irish state required more than military discipline - it needed a rather revolutionary social programme. It was from this recognition, the writer claimed, that the Saor Éire Programme emerged: a platform that sought to rally Ireland's workers and small farmers to a vision of a sovereign Irish Republic founded on principles of state socialism. According to the article, the creation of the Saor Éire movement had signalled a significant development in Irish republican thinking. It aimed to root the republican cause not only in nationalism but in the material struggles of the working class and rural poor. However, the movement, still in its infancy, was soon battered by what the writer described as "the terror" of the Cosgrave government's repression and the fierce condemnation it faced from the Roman Catholic Church. Following the fall of the Cosgrave regime and the electoral success of Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil, the writer claimed that a sense of complacency set in. The original, radical socialist vision that had been embedded in the Saor Éire programme-an idea of a united, sovereign Ireland built on social justice and state ownership-was increasingly sidelined or forgotten. In the opinion of '*An Phoblacht's*' editorialist, this marked a decline in the political direction and clarity of the IRA. The momentum that had once aimed at revolutionary transformation was, they argued, now dissipated. The article concluded by warning that without a firm ideological foundation and a return to its social-revolutionary roots, the republican movement risked drifting

[224] *United Irishman 15/10/1932*

into irrelevance or confusion. The text suggested that the politics of the IRA was in danger of sinking to a low level, but at the same time they may find that the de Valera-led government might have ultimately disclosed itself in a final binding agreement with England, one that would have given the leaders of the I.R.A. the necessary impulse, and cleared the way for the sharpest antagonism. They trusted that they had made it clear why the above analysis based its criticism of Irish affairs not on the position of the-then Government, but on the role of the I.R.A. It had become quite plain-so it seemed to them-that they expected nothing in Ireland from a supposedly bourgeois party government, but everything from the I.R.A., even if it did not, at that time, hold the position it deserved.[225]

Returning to form in a sharply worded editorial published in December 1932, the '*United Irishman*' raised alarm over the emergence of new rural organisations that, in its view, bore the hallmarks of Communist agitation-possibly with the covert backing of elements within the IRA. The editorial referred to a report in the '*Leinster Leader*' of 3rd December that year, describing a meeting in Kilbrick, where a new body known as The Workers' and Small-Farmers' Association had been formed. According to the editorial, the group's speakers had criticised the Fianna Fáil government for "allowing their efforts to be defeated by the capitalists of the country" and urged it to "organise the resources of the State." This rhetoric, the United Irishman claimed, was not accidental-it was an echo of international revolutionary language. Similar developments were reported in Donegal, where local papers noted the appearance of a group calling itself The National Workers' and Small Farmers' Association. At a Ballyshannon meeting covered by the Donegal Democrat on 12th November, the speeches were described by the United Irishman as clearly advancing a narrow, class-based agenda. The editorial accused the group of regurgitating the slogans of the Saor Éire manifesto of October 1931 and making liberal use of what it termed "international revolutionary jargon."

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[225] *An Phoblacht 3/12/1932*

The '*United Irishman*' further noted that the Castlefin branch of the organisation had orchestrated a so-called Hunger March to Stranorlar County Home on 21st November. It asserted that agitators were exploiting the hardships brought about by Fianna Fáil's failures to stoke unrest for their own ends. A particular focus of the editorial was the '*Irish Workers' Voice*,' a publication that, in its 26th November issue, allegedly instructed its readers on how to organise "Workers' Groups" to lay the groundwork for a future revolutionary party. The article, titled 'How Workers' Groups Will Lay the Base for the Party,' was cited as advising activists to seize upon even the smallest grievances - delays in labour exchanges, mistreatment in relief queues, or perceived neglect from officials - in order to win the confidence of workers. The '*United Irishman*' concluded that the ultimate goal was the creation of a Communist Party, cloaked in the language of social justice. The editorial ended on a pointed note of suspicion. It quipped whether or not the poor of Kildare and Donegal were being cynically used to prepare the ground for a Communist front. The article inferred that this may have been done with the silent blessing, or even the active involvement of the IRA, via Saor Éire. True to its combative and establishment tone, the '*United Irishman*' used this editorial not just to criticise perceived Communist infiltration, but to caution against class-based politics as a threat to the unity of the republican movement.[226]

Around the same time, Michael Price, deputising for the Chief-of-Staff of the IRA, addressed a meeting in County Waterford on the life and ideals of Liam Mellows. Price remarked that Liam Mellows had deeply understood all the inequalities and brutalities inherent in life as it was then organised. His contact with the humble citizens of the United States had revealed to him that the exploitation of the weak by the strong-where vast masses of people were oppressed to generate profit-was just as rampant, if not more so, in the United States as in the so-called British Empire. Liam,

[226] *United Irishman 17/12/1932*

horrified by this apparent injustice, had recognised that the root cause of all violence, cruelty, and oppression in the world was the desire to exploit others - whether it was individuals exploiting weaker individuals or one nation exploiting another. In short, he had seen that the British Empire, like all empires, existed because of the profit-driven system of production. This truth had deeply revolted him. He had resolved that in the Republic he envisioned for Ireland-a vision he had shared with countless others who were willing to sacrifice greatly-there would be no place for the exploitation of the weak by those selfish enough to seek profit and comfort at the expense of others. Recalled from the United States, where he had done remarkable work, Mellows had spoken out vehemently against the humiliations embodied in the so-called Treaty. His speech opposing the Treaty, when read later, revealed his wisdom, compassion, and clear logic.

Mellows had said they had been told that unity was necessary and that they all wanted unity in Ireland. For the preceding years, they had unity-but only on one basis: the Republic. He warned that if that basis was destroyed, unity could not be achieved. He urged people not to fool themselves or their consciences on the matter, as no one knew where such actions would lead. No matter how they tried to reconcile later, they could not have unity by rejecting the Republic or by approving the Treaty. He believed that the honour of Ireland was far too sacred to be bargained away.

Price also remarked that it was a matter of history “how war was declared on the Irish Republic” in June 1922, when Free State forces-supported by British artillery-shelled the Four Courts, where Republican forces had taken a stand. Despite heroic resistance, the garrison was ultimately forced to surrender and lay down their arms. Among those captured was Liam Mellows, who was taken prisoner and held in Mountjoy Prison from June until the grim morning of 8th December. During his five months of imprisonment, Mellows had time for deep reflection. His most significant thoughts were recorded in a memorandum dated 15th August 1922, addressed to the General Headquarters of the IRA. It

was remarked that this document came to be known as the IRA's 'Mellows Programme.'

Price, citing the Programme of Liam Mellows remarked that when written in 1922, consisted of three core paragraphs, although they were not formally divided. These were the central points outlined in the document:

- A Provisional Republican Government should have been set up at once.
- The programme of Democratic Control (the Social Programme), which had been adopted by the Dáil alongside the Declaration of Independence in 1919, should have been made concrete. Mellows argued that it was necessary to clarify what that programme meant. He proposed the following interpretation:

> *"Under the Republic, all industry will be controlled by the State for the workers' and farmers' benefit. All transport systems-railways, canals, etc. - will be operated by the State for the benefit of the workers and farmers. All banks will be operated by the State for the benefit of industry and agriculture, not for the purpose of profit making."*

He laid out a propaganda strategy that included several components:

- ***Explanation and Exposure:*** He urged a clear exposition of what the rejection of the Treaty by Ireland truly meant. He emphasised the need to explain the nature of the British Empire-its origins, its mechanisms of survival and expansion-and to argue that freeing Ireland only to replicate the imperial and capitalist models of decaying European nations would also be a betrayal of true independence.
- ***Legitimacy of the Republic:*** Mellows insisted on demonstrating that the Republic had been-and still was-a living political reality, not merely an abstract aspiration.
- ***Critique of the Catholic Hierarchy:*** Mellows provided a strongly critical historical survey of the Catholic hierarchy

in Ireland, claiming they had consistently opposed popular and revolutionary movements: against the people in 1798; excommunicating Fr. Murphy, Roche, and others; condemning Emmet; opposing the Young Irelanders by branding them "godless young men"; supporting the supposedly corrupt Sadleir and Keogh; opposing the Fenians (e.g. Bishop Moriarty declaring that “Hell was not hot enough nor eternity long enough” for them); against the Plan of Campaign; opposing early Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers; supporting England during the European War in 1914; condemning the 1916 Easter Rising; and only opposing conscription when forced by public opinion.

He noted that the Church had denounced Padraig Pearse, whom Mellows described as a great example of Christian idealism, and had even excommunicated IRA volunteers during the Black and Tan “terror,” such as Bishop Colohan’s excommunication decree of December 1920. Price claimed that had Mellows warned of the danger to Catholicism in Ireland from such actions, arguing that they elevated hypocrisy and deceit. At this point in a public reading of the document, Fr. O’Keeffe, who had been standing at the graveside, reportedly interjected, saying that he thought it was best not to labour the point further.

Price continued by nothing that, on 29 August 1922, Liam Mellows again wrote to the IRA General Headquarters, continuing his efforts to set a principled and radical direction for the Irish Republic. Price cited an extract of the letter, which declared that:

> *“Fianna. We must concentrate on youth - salvation of the country lies in this. Fianna never got proper help or encouragement. Fianna ideal can save the future.”*

‘*An Phoblacht*’ also reported that the Mellows document which Price read had outlined a Social Programme for Republicans, which was later taken as the basis for the Saor Éire Programme. That Programme, declared Price, had been just as applicable in the present moment, as it was when

Mellows had first proposed its adoption. He believed that, had the country possessed the courage to implement it, both its economic salvation and its national liberation could have been achieved through it.[227]

In the view of an editorial published by the '*Irish Independent*' during April 1933, it was suggested that Miss Mary MacSwiney had actually failed to recognise the true implications of the I.R.A.'s political manifesto. The editorial strongly criticised the I.R.A.'s public statements, particularly its support for "public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people." According to the newspaper, this amounted to an open declaration of Communist principles-principles that had been explicitly condemned by the Catholic Church. The editorial asserted that, while the I.R.A. may not have adopted the entire Communist doctrine, it had certainly endorsed its core tenets regarding economics. By demanding public ownership of all means of production, the I.R.A., in the writer's view, had effectively committed itself to abolishing private property - particularly land and productive capital such as farms and mills. This, the paper argued, constituted "pure, undiluted Communism."

The article bolstered its argument by quoting from 'Rerum Novarum,' the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, which had declared the "community of goods" a fundamental error. The encyclical had warned that socialism injured the very people it claimed to help and violated natural human rights, particularly the right to private property. The editorial took this further, contending that a denial of private property was not merely an economic matter, but a philosophical and theological one. It argued that man's right to property stemmed from his possession of a rational, immaterial soul. To deny this right, according to the paper, was to implicitly deny the spiritual nature of the human person, and by extension, the existence of God. In this way, the I.R.A.'s economic position was framed as not only Communist, but implicitly atheistic and anti-Christian.

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[227] *An Phoblacht 17/12/1932*

MacSwiney's defence-that state ownership of some public utilities, such as the Shannon Scheme, did not contradict Catholic teaching - was dismissed by the editorial. It argued that while limited state ownership was acceptable, the I.R.A.'s manifesto demanded exclusive public ownership, which the editorial described as unnatural and anti-human. Furthermore, the editorial accused the I.R.A. of embracing not only Communist economic ideas, but also the Marxist principle of class warfare. It pointed to I.R.A. statements directed at Ulster Orangemen in 1932, which had called for various wage-earners and small producers to unite under revolutionary leadership. The language, in the view of the editorial writer, was clearly inspired by Marxist class struggle and thus confirmed the Communist nature of the movement. The editorial went on to defend the Irish bishops' 1931 condemnation of the Saor Éire movement, stating that their concerns had been fully justified. The bishops had described Saor Éire as an effort to mobilise Irish workers and farmers into a revolutionary movement to establish a Communist state. According to the '*Independent*,' the I.R.A. had now declared officially for such a republic - one that had been condemned by both the Pope and the bishops.

The editorial also accused Communist sympathisers of a propaganda campaign designed to mislead the public. This campaign, it claimed, sought to portray critics of the I.R.A. as imperialists or Freemasons, and to frame opposition to Communism as opposition to Irish independence itself. The writer cited MacSwiney as an example of someone who had been drawn into this narrative, denying the I.R.A.'s Communism and accusing its critics of siding with Britain. In conclusion, the editorial posed a challenge: if the I.R.A. truly believed its programme was compatible with Catholic teaching, why would it not submit its aims to the judgement of the Church and abide by its decision? The refusal to do so, it argued, suggested the I.R.A. knew its objectives were incompatible with Catholic doctrine.[228]

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[228] *Irish Independent 12/4/1933*

By May 1933, in a strongly worded editorial, the '*United Irishman*' once again raised alarm at what it claimed were long-standing and now open efforts to establish a formal Communist organisation in Ireland under the direction of the Third International. According to the newspaper, this development had been in preparation for some time, with significant groundwork laid throughout 1930 and 1931. The editorial accused Communist organisers of deliberately targeting young and impressionable members of the IRA and other similar groups, claiming they were fed ideological material under the guise of republicanism, and absorbed it uncritically. The Saor Éire programme, the piece argued, had been drafted entirely along Communist lines and was being promoted to the IRA by senior officers, some of whom travelled the country to advocate for its adoption using their military rank to lend credibility. The piece cited the arrest of the IRA's Adjutant-General while in possession of the Saor Éire constitution as a key moment when the extent of this supposed ideological infiltration became public knowledge. It went on to credit two major developments with halting this supposed Communist advance: the Catholic hierarchy's joint pastoral letter condemning Communist activity in Ireland, and the passage of the Constitution Amendment Act, which removed certain legal immunities that, in the editorial's view, had emboldened militant groups. According to the '*United Irishman*,' these two events caused a shift in public perception, leading many young republicans - dismissed by the writer as "dupes" - to reconsider their involvement in what was framed as a covert Communist campaign, masquerading as patriotic struggle.[229]

The following month, the same paper featured another editorial. The article discusses a forceful condemnation of militant republican activity, where Bishop O'Doherty of Galway and Kilmacduagh had warned the faithful against involvement with both the IRA and Saor Éire, describing them as "sinful and irreligious" organisations. This was not, the editorial notes, a political broadside, but a grave moral pronouncement from a senior figure in the Catholic Church.

[229] *United Irishman 20/5/1933*

The bishop's words were framed as representing the authoritative voice of Church teaching, issued only after careful reflection and with a strong sense of pastoral duty. The editorial echoes the bishop's concern, highlighting what it describes as the deeply troubling power claimed by the IRA - the supposedly self-appointed right to take life without accountability. According to the writer, such power poses a fundamental threat to moral order and civil society. It goes on to stress the principle of civilian supremacy over the military, holding up the National Army of the Irish Free State as a legitimate force under democratic control. The editorial praises the structure whereby army personnel are accountable to civilian authority - specifically to the Minister for Defence and ultimately the Dáil - and are subject to the law like any other citizen. Hypothetical scenarios are invoked to illustrate the illegality of extrajudicial violence, reinforcing the message that no soldier has the right to act outside the rule of law. By contrast, the IRA is portrayed as operating entirely outside such structures. The piece criticises the organisation for refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the Irish Free State and for lacking any recognised civil authority to which it is accountable. In this view, the IRA's officers are described as "a law unto themselves", with the implication that their vision of a republic would be underpinned by military, not democratic, authority.[230]

A week later, the '*United Irishman*' included a guest contribution, clearly framed as a defence of the senior Catholic clergy in Ireland, and a denunciation of the IRA and '*An Phoblacht*.' The contributor reacts with indignation to recent attacks on the Irish Catholic bishops by '*An Phoblacht*,' describing those criticisms as "outrageous" and unjustified. The writer asserts that the IRA's hostility toward the Church-and particularly its ridicule of the bishops' warnings-only reinforces the legitimacy of the episcopal denunciations of communism and irreligion within the republican movement. The letter opens by recalling the context of what the writer sees as "trying days," when the Catholic faith in Ireland is under sustained ideological attack.

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[230] *United Irishman 3/6/1933*

In this climate, the bishops' intervention is described as necessary and courageous. The contributor rejects any suggestion that such clerical involvement is political interference, instead portraying it as a moral defence of faith and civilisation. If such loyalty to Church and faith is considered "Imperialism," the writer says, then he is proud to be counted among such "Imperialists"-in solidarity with the bishops and priests of Ireland. The author is particularly incensed by '*An Phoblacht's*' publication of a resolution from a London-based republican club condemning the Bishop of Galway's sermon. This act-seen as crossing the Irish Sea to find anti-clerical support-is presented as a betrayal of Irish Catholic nationalism. "Imagine," the writer exclaims, "Irish Republicans turning to England to attack Irish bishops!"

In contrast, the author calls on Catholics nationwide to rise in defence of their faith and their clergy. The IRA, Saor Éire, and associated groups are branded as subversive enemies of both religion and social order. The writer urges the government to take action by officially proscribing these groups. The submission goes on to reprint and rebut '*An Phoblacht's'* scathing response to the Bishop of Galway's related remarks, made during a Confirmation ceremony in Kinvara. The bishop had warned his young audience that the IRA was responsible for acts of murder in preceding years, and '*An Phoblacht*' had denounced this as one of the "most indecent and outrageous attacks on the revered traditions of the Irish nation." Yet, the letter writer defends the bishop, arguing that these events-the murders and crimes of the Civil War period-are undeniable facts, not historical distortions. He suggests that while the children in attendance may not have fully understood the context, the bishop's warning was accurate and necessary. The writer concludes by accusing contemporary republicans of perpetrating violence in the name of patriotism and of seeking to impose their vision of a republic through crime and coercion. Against this backdrop, he presents the bishops as moral guardians, unfairly maligned for defending the people and the Church. To oppose them, he claims, is to aid those "native preachers of

anti-religion" who would accomplish what centuries of imperial oppression could not.[231]

Also that month, the '*Derry Journal*' published a statement that had been issued by the original Communist Party of Ireland in response to allegations from the leadership of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) suggesting a link between the Army's activities and Communism. The Communist Party stated that it felt an obligation to address the concerns raised by the I.R.A. leadership regarding the so-called "charge of Communism." It asserted clearly that, at that time, there was no Communist influence present in the policies of the Army Council. The Party pointed to several instances as proof, including the abandonment of Saor Éire after its original launch, the I.R.A.'s public disavowal of Volunteer George Gilmore's defence of Connolly House against alleged anti-Communist attackers, and an overall withdrawal by the leadership from earlier, more radical anti-capitalist positions.

Furthermore, the Communist Party objected strongly to the I.R.A. leadership taking it upon themselves to define Communist ideology and accused them of misrepresenting it by suggesting that atheism was a core tenet. The Party denied this, clarifying that neither the Irish Communist Party nor its international counterparts upheld any such doctrine. They argued that this accusation was as unfounded as assuming a religious doctrine was required for I.R.A. membership. The Party also challenged a claim made by the I.R.A. that no members of their organisation had attended the recent Communist Party Congress. According to the Party, roughly half of the Congress delegates were I.R.A. members, and it stated that the Army Council was fully aware of this dual membership. In closing, the Communist Party argued that the I.R.A. leadership's recent public declarations appeared to be an attempt to distance themselves from controversy and avoid persecution. By introducing religious themes into the discourse, the leadership was, in the Party's view, resorting to the same divisive tactics that had previously been used against them.

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[231] *United Irishman 10/6/1933*

In a related development, Mr. Maurice Twomey, delivering an official address on behalf of the I.R.A. at Wolfe Tone's grave that Sunday, reiterated that the Army was not aligned with Communism. He claimed the accusation had no basis and attributed it to British imperialist efforts to discredit national resistance. Twomey argued that the Communist label was being applied indiscriminately to individuals or organisations that opposed British rule or the prevailing economic and social structures. He maintained that only those benefiting from exploitation and inequality could support the status quo, while the broader Irish population had every reason to resist it. Despite this, it was also noted that the '*Irish Press*' reported that approximately eighty men and women participated in the Bodenstown procession under the banner of the Dublin branch of the Communist Party of Ireland. Their banners promoted a vision of a free Ireland and a free working class, quoting James Connolly. Several participants were observed wearing red rosettes.[232]

Later in June, in a sharply critical editorial, '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' lambasted the IRA leadership for what it described as a panicked and sudden retreat from socialist and communist ideas it had once actively promoted. The editorial portrayed the IRA's repudiation of communism not as a principled clarification, but as a capitulation to pressure from the capitalist class, the Catholic hierarchy, and the political establishment. For the first time, figures such as Seán MacBride and Moss Twomey had publicly declared, on religious grounds, their personal disavowal of communism, with '*An Phoblacht*' insisting that "no movement that denies God and promotes hostility to Christianity can succeed." '*The Irish Workers' Voice*' derided these statements as indistinguishable from the rhetoric of the '*Irish Independent*,' the '*Catholic Mind*,' or even government-aligned media-proof, in their eyes, that the IRA leadership had joined the "anti-Communist crusade." The editorial stressed that the IRA had previously embraced the language and vision of radical change on communist lines. In the autumn of 1931, it

[232] *Derry Journal 23/6/1933*

had launched the Saor Éire movement as an explicitly working-class republican organisation. The publication believed that, though flawed from a Marxist standpoint, Saor Éire had addressed matters such as class conflict, wealth inequality, and private property. Previously, the IRA had seemed willing to challenge capitalism, and align itself with the discontent of workers and small farmers. That moment, however, did not last. The IRA leadership, '*The Irish Workers' Voice'* argued, abandoned its radical orientation almost overnight in response to a co-ordinated backlash. The bishops issued a sweeping pastoral letter condemning socialism and the IRA's "Muscovite" sympathies, while the Cosgrave government introduced the Coercion Act. Faced with mounting repression and clerical hostility, the IRA leadership quickly distanced itself from the very ideas it had championed only months before.

The editorial accused the IRA of succumbing to pressure, rather than holding its ground. It argued that this retreat was not driven by genuine religious feeling but by fear of alienating the dominant capitalist and clerical forces. Their newfound concern for "religion" was viewed as a cover for political surrender. The IRA, once a voice of defiance, had now joined what the paper called a "conveyor system" of capitalist reaction: Cumann na nGaedheal pushing imperial capitalism, Fianna Fáil offering mild nationalism, and the Church attacking the left in the name of faith. By turning its back on its former "Social Republicanism," the IRA leadership had, in the eyes of '*The Irish Workers' Voice*,' betrayed the workers and small farmers who had once looked to it for leadership. The paper concluded that the IRA's retreat from communism-mockingly dubbed "the retreat from Moscow"-was not a spiritual awakening but a strategic sellout to reactionary interests. Far from being a revolution in motion, the IRA was consequently seen as an instrument of the very social forces it once claimed to oppose.[233]

It was clear, however, that the '*United Irishman*' did not "buy" this public distancing by the IRA. At the outset of July,

[233] *The Irish Workers' Voice 24/6/1933*

in a sardonic and cutting editorial, the '*United Irishman*' tore into the IRA leadership's sudden repudiation of communism, portraying it as a cynical and tactical manoeuvre rather than a principled shift. The paper suggested that the IRA bosses were not driven by belief but by expedience - "trimming" their message to align with prevailing public prejudices, especially religious sensitivities. Two years earlier, the editorial recalled, the IRA had boldly launched Saor Éire, a movement promising a radical programme centred on the public ownership of industry and agriculture. At the time, the leadership appeared to believe the people were ready for a more militant social message. However, when Saor Éire was met with swift and fierce resistance from both the Catholic Church and the Cosgrave government, the IRA quickly dropped the project, retreating into vaguer rhetoric. Even their commitment to "public ownership" had become something to be "explained away," as suspicion of left-wing ideas lingered among the public. To truly dispel those fears, the editorial suggested, the IRA leadership resorted to loud and theatrical declarations of anti-communism-not as conviction, but as political camouflage.

The Communist Party, '*United Irishman*' noted with dry irony, should have appreciated that these manoeuvres were part of the long game. After all, if the IRA were to smuggle socialism into Ireland, it would have to do so in disguise. But instead of playing along, the Communists had called out the IRA's retreat, even highlighting that half the delegates at a recent Communist Congress were IRA members. This, the editorial quipped, was not only "indiscreet" but outright sabotage-fuel for the very suspicions the IRA had been desperate to allay. The paper also mocked the recent deportation order against Communist activist Jim Gralton - describing the government's action as a performative gesture meant to reassure the public. Despite the order, Gralton remained in Ireland, which, according to '*The United Irishman*,' showed that the entire affair was political theatre designed to appease reactionaries without real consequence. Further ridicule was aimed at the orchestrated "victory" of Fianna Fáil over the IRA in the realm of symbolism. The paper sardonically observed how de Valera had cleverly

scheduled National Army manoeuvres to coincide with the IRA's pilgrimage to Bodenstown, ensuring that the state's spectacle outshone the Republican commemoration. Even the weather, the editorial joked, seemed to take sides. The piece closed with an acid commentary on the fragmentation of the Republican cause, illustrated through the figure of Mary MacSwiney. Her walkout from Cumann na mBán's convention over a constitutional change - namely, dropping allegiance to the long-defunct Second Dáil - was painted as the logical endpoint of purist politics: a "party of one." Her journey symbolised, in the editors' eyes, how childish absolutism had helped pave the way for civil war, and now amounted to political irrelevance.[234]

During early September, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on the life and funeral of David Fitzgerald, a leading IRA figure in GHQ. The paper remarked that, apart from his various military responsibilities, in which he had distinguished himself, David Fitzgerald was a man of broad intellect and deep learning. He was keenly aware that the true purpose of the Republican movement extended far beyond the goal of parliamentary separation from England. For Fitzgerald, Republicanism also entailed ending Ireland's economic exploitation, and building a new social order rooted in justice and equality. The publication declared that when the broader social and economic implications of the national struggle began to take centre stage within the movement, Fitzgerald played a prominent role. Possessing a strong grasp of political economy, he became a leading advocate for integrating social justice into the Republican programme. He was one of the key architects behind the establishment of Saor Éire, the IRA's attempt to build an organisation expressly representing the interests of workers and small farmers. The newspaper also noted that at the IRA's 1930 National Convention, where Saor Éire was formally launched, Fitzgerald was unanimously elected as its National Secretary-a testament to the trust and respect he commanded. In the difficult period that followed, with Saor Éire attracting the ire of both the Church and the state, Fitzgerald had found

[234] *United Irishman 1/7/1933*

himself a target of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.). While on the run, he had reportedly endured even greater personal hardship, remaining committed to the cause he had helped in shaping. Among those at the funeral included senior IRA figures, such as Sean Russell and Peadar O'Donnell.[235]

On the same topic, the '*Irish Workers' Voice*' opined that, throughout his life, David Fitzgerald evolved steadily as a political thinker. It was remarked that, in time, he came to understand that only a Workers' and Farmers' Republic could deliver both national and social freedom to the Irish people. His dedication to this vision-of a liberated Ireland that served not just the nation but the working class-made him a respected figure among various republicans. At his funeral, members of the Dublin District Committee of the original Communist Party of Ireland marched in tribute, honouring his life of struggle and sacrifice. A wreath was laid in his memory by notorious communist agitators such as Sean Murray, Jim Larkin Jr., Bill Gannon, and Donal O'Reilly-figures who, in that paper's view, like Fitzgerald, had committed themselves to the cause of working-class emancipation.[236]

The '*United Irishman*' would again move against the IRA as part of its ongoing series titled 'The IRA and Communism' during October. Also attacking Fianna Fáil, the '*United Irishman*' would claim that there could be no mistaking the consequences of the current government's policy, which was that of leaving the farming population increasingly unable to meet their financial obligations - whether through annuities or rates. This deterioration of rural life, the paper argued, created fertile ground for the IRA's "criminal" tactics, which were portrayed as intentionally designed to provoke agrarian upheaval and ultimately, class war. The IRA, in this telling, was accused of pursuing a revolutionary land policy drawn directly from the Bolshevik playbook. Echoing the strategies

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[235] *An Phoblacht 9/9/1933*

[236] *The Irish Workers' Voice 16/9/1933*

of Lenin, their aim was to transform small and middle peasant farmers-typically conservative in outlook-into either active participants in or passive enablers of a Communist uprising. According to this view, by unleashing disruption in the countryside, the IRA hoped to neutralise potential rural resistance while consolidating revolutionary power in the towns and cities. A particular target of scorn was Peadar O'Donnell, a prominent IRA leader and the chief theorist behind its agrarian strategy. The '*United Irishman*' identified him as the most consistent advocate of a Bolshevik land programme in Ireland, quoting extensively from his writings published by '*Sphinx*,' a Dublin-based press accused of spreading Communist doctrine. The piece juxtaposes O'Donnell's arguments with those of Lenin, pointing out that both viewed smallholdings as bastions of capitalism and both recognised that the peasantry had to be won over - first through caution, then through coercion. O'Donnell's supposed prescription: collectivise industry first, then move on to the land, using whatever "catastrophic methods" proved necessary-though euphemistically presented as "common sense".

The accusation was not merely that the IRA had dabbled in far-left ideas. Rather, '*The United Irishman*' claimed that Saor Éire, Peasant Committees, and the IRA itself were actively plotting to turn the Irish countryside into a battlefield of class war, sowing division among farmers, and setting the stage for a Communist seizure of power.[237]

An instalment of '*The United Irishman's'* ongoing series, 'The IRA and Communism,' from later that month, continued its fierce campaign against what it portrayed as the ideological corruption of the Irish Republican Army by Communist leadership. In it, the author accused the IRA not merely of political radicalism, but of calculated deception, alleging that its public commemorations had masked a deeper revolutionary programme. The writer asked: to what extent had the IRA rank and file been indoctrinated with Communist ideology? While claiming that this question was

[237] *United Irishman 14/10/1933*

"not easy to answer," the article quickly cast doubt on the IRA's sincerity, asserting that the movement had become a secretive, cloaked organisation, only emerging for funerals and anniversaries. According to the article, these events no longer represented genuine mourning, but rather a "gruesome form of bodysnatching" - a political exploitation of the dead, designed to manipulate public sentiment and advance a hidden agenda. Mourning, it claimed, was weaponised. Just as IRA men wore masks during rural raids, the movement used nationalist symbols to conceal a fundamentally Communist doctrine. Apart from its funerary theatrics, the IRA, the article argued, operated under a series of guises - the Anti-Imperialist League, the British Boycott League, even seemingly harmless cultural events. These fronts, it claimed, allowed the IRA to push its agenda in disguise, masking its true nature from the public. Given the covert structure of the IRA, the article admitted it was difficult for outsiders to determine the ideological convictions of the rank and file. But it claimed there was no such ambiguity when it came to the leadership.

The article then listed a roster of individuals whom it accused of leading a campaign to turn the IRA into a Communist vanguard:

- Peadar O'Donnell
- Seán MacBride
- George Gilmore
- David Fitzgerald
- Frank Ryan
- Domhnall Ó Donnchadha
- Seán McGuinness
- Seán Mulgrew
- Seán McCool
- Michael Fitzpatrick

These men were portrayed as disciples of Marx and Lenin, cloaking their ideology in cultural nationalist language, while sowing the seeds of class war in the countryside. The case of Michael Price, a former dissenter who had later fallen "into step" with the Communist faction after the establishment of

Saor Éire, was held up as a cautionary tale. His subsequent assertion that Christianity and Communism were not inherently incompatible was treated with open derision by the paper. In the eyes of '*The United Irishman*,' these leaders were not visionaries but ideological infiltrators, orchestrating a stealth revolution through symbolism, secrecy, and the manipulation of Ireland's dead.[238]

At the end of October, the '*United Irishman*' asserted that at the beginning of 1933, the leadership of the Irish Republican Army appeared supremely self-satisfied. According to this antagonistic article, they had, by their own measure, successfully propagated covert Communism across the country, encountering barely a whisper of resistance - save for objections from a few members of the Catholic hierarchy. These dissenting clergy were quickly dismissed by IRA apologists as merely "traditionally hostile to the movement for national independence." According to the paper, in the eyes of the IRA leadership, the situation seemed to mirror that of 1931, when Saor Éire had been launched with similarly bold revolutionary ambitions. By 1933, they judged the political climate to have ripened sufficiently to begin dispensing with the separatist cloak that had to that point veiled their Communist aims. This shift was signalled clearly. In January, an IRA Convention, followed by a February manifesto from the Army Council, openly declared the IRA's social policy: "the public ownership of the means of production and distribution" - in plain terms, the abolition of private property.

The paper also remarked that the general election of that year had returned Fianna Fáil to power with an increased majority, and this, too, emboldened the IRA's leadership. Among some of the more exuberant republicans, the electoral shift was interpreted as evidence that the political tide was turning in their favour, even if that tide had first to wash through the "reformist" channel of Fianna Fáil. Either way, they now saw the new government as unlikely to challenge their activities - whether military organisation, ideological proselytising, or

[238] *United Irishman 21/10/1933*

the intimidation of their political opponents (many of whom were also opponents of Fianna Fáil). The leadership wagered - not without reason - that the Government would prefer to turn a blind eye to the IRA, now that the two shared common enemies on the political scene. In the months that followed, the article outlined that leading IRA figures Peadar O'Donnell, Michael Price, George Gilmore, Frank Ryan, and Michael Fitzpatrick grew increasingly forthright in promoting the Communist implications of the IRA's social programme. At an aeridheacht in Tirconnell, George Gilmore encapsulated their ideological ambition:

> *"It was to assert the sovereignty and unity of the Republic of Ireland, in which the means of production, distribution, and exchange would be vested in the Irish people."*

The '*United Irishman*' claimed that it was during this moment of peak revolutionary optimism that the James Gralton affair erupted - a moment that, according to the '*United Irishman*,' revealed the IRA's true colours "like litmus paper under acid."

Gralton, a returned emigrant from America, was a declared Communist in the full Bolshevik sense, hailing from Effrinagh, County Leitrim. However, the paper claimed that he went even further than the typical IRA ideologue: Gralton's rhetoric, they believed, edged toward open atheism. To his credit, the article sneered, he made no effort to conceal his beliefs. Rather than distancing themselves from this firebrand, the IRA leadership chose to defend Gralton - repeating what the paper saw as the same mistake made with Saor Éire two years earlier: the overestimation of public readiness to accept "social-revolutionary teaching." Once again, the result was backlash. The IRA had misread the mood of the people, failing to account for what Peadar O'Donnell might have dismissed as "clerical prejudices" but which still held firm sway across much of the countryside. Though not as calamitous as the Saor Éire debacle, the Gralton episode nonetheless exposed the limits of the IRA's ideological reach - and, in the eyes of '*The United Irishman*,'

confirmed that the republican movement's leadership had strayed far from its supposed roots, into the treacherous waters of Marxist revolution.

Referring to Saor Éire in a November edition of the '*United Irishman*,' another article seemingly becomes the most overtly hostile of the series, up to that point in time, deeply polemical and rhetorically charged. It offers a full-frontal assault on the IRA's perceived alignment with Communism, using intense and at times inflammatory language. This editorial from '*The United Irishman*,' a pro-Blueshirt publication (opponents of the IRA), presented a scathing denunciation of the IRA, accusing it of becoming a vehicle for Communist revolution in Ireland. The central rhetorical move throughout the piece was the equation of the IRA with Communism, which was portrayed as a foreign, atheistic, and violent ideology that was incompatible with what was deemed as Irish Christian civilisation. The editorial framed the IRA not as a conventional pro-independence army, but as a "Communist-I.R.A.", a fifth column within the Irish nation. The text claimed that the most serious threat to Ireland did not come from outside forces, but from "within our own household." Despite acknowledging that some IRA members might be well-intentioned, it argued that many were criminals or "potentially criminal" types drawn to violence during times of upheaval. This served to morally delegitimise the IRA, by casting them as both ideologically subversive and socially dangerous. The editorial asserted that the IRA operated not as a pro-independence army, but as a conspiratorial gang, behaving more like "gangsters of the industrial underworld" than political revolutionaries. Their methods were described as "criminal hooliganism", "assassination", and "violence", language aimed at evoking fear and revulsion.

One of the key rhetorical strategies was drawing a parallel with the Russian Revolution, claiming that the IRA's Communist tactics were modelled on the Bolsheviks who seized power despite being a minority. The article accused Fianna Fáil of playing the role of Kerensky - the supposedly weak liberal who allowed Communist revolution to flourish

in Russia, by failing to crush the IRA. This comparison was intended to suggest that unless strong action was taken, Ireland would suffer the same fate as Soviet Russia. Similarly, the editorial drew a comparison between the rise of the Blueshirts and the Italian Blackshirts, arguing that both had emerged in response to Communist threats and weak governance. However, rather than overtly glorifying fascism, the editorial had subtly acknowledged that Mussolini's dictatorship might have been avoidable, with firmer initial leadership. This reflects an attempt to legitimise the Blueshirts' paramilitary posture, without fully endorsing foreign fascist regimes.

The editorial accused the Fianna Fáil government of betraying its democratic responsibilities by tolerating, or even aiding, the IRA and Communist groups. It claimed that Éamon de Valera's government had failed to act decisively, even going so far as to persecute the Blueshirts while giving the IRA a free hand. The piece interpreted this as evidence of a tacit "united front" between Fianna Fáil, the IRA, and Communists, which it described as a "conspiracy between law and illegal violence." It cited statements from figures like Frank Aiken and George Gilmore to argue that Fianna Fáil would rather lose power to Communists than to constitutional opponents. This built the case for the Blueshirts as the only remaining defenders of national and Christian order.

The editorial highlighted IRA documents and speeches-particularly from '*An Phoblacht*' and '*The Irish Workers' Voice*'-as proof that the IRA had fully embraced class warfare. It referenced a 1933 Army Council statement advocating attacks on the "internal enemies of Irish freedom" as indicative of Marxist influence. George Gilmore's remarks were also quoted to show the IRA's preference for socialist revolution over nationalist aims. The editorial stressed that once the IRA felt protected by government inaction, it dropped any pretence of mere nationalism and openly pursued a revolutionary class war. This point was critical in constructing the IRA not just as anti-government, but as

supposedly anti-Irish, threatening the livelihoods of ordinary citizens.

A recurring rhetorical device was the claim to accurate, objective analysis. The editorial insisted that its portrayal of the IRA's Communist alignment was based on their own writings, speeches, and manifestoes, and that "no one has challenged the accuracy" of these quotations. This posture of reasoned objectivity was used to enhance the editorial's credibility and pre-empt accusations of bias. This editorial was part of a wider ideological battle in 1930s Ireland, where political rhetoric often relied on stark moral binaries and ideological demonisation. The text reflects how the IRA's tentative alignment with revolutionary socialist ideas provided much fodder for their opponents to cast them as foreign, atheist, subversive, and criminal, rather than as legitimate heirs of the republican tradition. It also illustrates how political writing during this period used historical analogies, religious moralism, and a language of existential threat to justify the new rise of alternative paramilitary movements, like the Blueshirts. Even when toned down, the editorial serves as a potent example of how fear of Communism was weaponised to reshape public opinion and political legitimacy in post-Civil War Ireland.

A '*United Irishman*' editorial from the same issue described events in Balla, County Mayo, at the beginning of the month as further evidence of the supposed necessity for a Blueshirt company "in every parish" in Ireland. The incident in question was the disruption of what the paper called a "perfectly legal and peaceful" meeting of local farmers-supporters of a "United Ireland"-who had assembled to form a branch of that organisation. The editorial stressed that the "hooliganism" which allegedly broke up the gathering took place in a district without a Blueshirt presence. The implication was clear: had such a company existed locally, those who "incited and led the howling mob" that smashed the school windows would have stayed "in the safety of their homes."

Even more "significant," the editorial claimed, was the identity of those involved in the disturbance. According to the piece, the "rabble" had been led by a "choice selection" of Fianna Fáil and IRA "stalwarts," many of whom were in the employment of a local Fianna Fáil leader. Two of the "chief hooligans" were also described as known members of Saor Éire, the "Communist organisation" outcasted by the Irish Bishops in 1932. The piece infers that Fianna Fáil, by this time in government was willing to turn a blind eye to such disturbances that affected opponents.[239]

During late November, the '*Derry Journal*' reported that, speaking at the Foresters' Hall, Mr Cahir Healy, M.P., made a pointed and unambiguous intervention in the ongoing debate over the true nature of the anti-partition campaign, particularly in South Down, Central Belfast, and the Foyle Division of Derry. His remarks directly addressed the growing claims made by the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) and its so-called "Army Council" to be the sole legitimate force capable of ending Partition. Mr Healy reportedly had methodically dismantled the arguments presented by the I.R.A.'s representatives, who had recently spoken in various parts of the North. These individuals had been acting on behalf of a shadowy and unnamed "Army Council" based in Dublin. Healy noted that the public knew next to nothing about this body-not even its composition. He drew attention to its alleged murky connections with groups such as Saor Éire, the Friends of Soviet Russia, and advocates of a purported "Workers' Republic," many of whom espoused Communist views.

Raising a sharp and uncomfortable question, Mr Healy asked why, if this Army Council was indeed the only organisation with the will and ability to dismantle Partition-as its emissaries had been claiming in Derry, Belfast, and South Down-it was being granted open access to Northern audiences. He contrasted this with the treatment of Mr Éamon de Valera, who at that very time was being threatened with arrest, imprisonment, and deportation should he attempt

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[239] *United Irishman 18/11/1933*

to speak in South Down. In his view, such inconsistency revealed a troubling double standard. Adding further weight to his argument, Mr Healy referred to a letter released that Saturday by the Orange Order's Grand Masters, which bore the signature of Lord Craigavon himself. The letter asserted that, despite internal divisions, the main political parties in the Irish Free State remained united in their claim over the Six Counties. Notably absent from the statement was any mention of the I.R.A.-an omission Mr Healy found telling.

He questioned whether the Stormont Government truly perceived the I.R.A. as a threat. Was their anti-partition rhetoric taken so lightly that they were ignored altogether? Or, more provocatively, did the Northern Government see value in their actions-not as a genuine challenge to Partition, but as a source of discord within the wider nationalist movement? Mr Healy left his audience with the impression that these were not idle concerns. The silence from Stormont regarding the I.R.A.'s activities, coupled with its heavy-handed suppression of constitutional nationalists, hinted at a deeper strategy: one that may have viewed the presence of the I.R.A. as politically useful in sowing confusion and weakening unified opposition to Partition. The implications of this contrast in treatment, Mr Healy suggested, deserved careful reflection.[240]

In December 1933, a '*United Irishman*' editorial cited remarks made in a Dáil debate on 14 March 1929, where Mr. Éamon de Valera reportedly expressed his view that the legitimacy of the existing Irish government, and indeed the Dáil itself, was flawed. He further implied that members of the I.R.A. who had remained in the organisation after his own departure were equally entitled to claim the same political continuity that he and his followers had once asserted up to 1925. According to the '*United Irishman*,' these statements effectively endorsed the idea that the I.R.A. - rather than the democratically elected government of the State - represented the "lawful" authority in Ireland. Further evidence of Mr. de Valera's sympathies was, according to the

[240] *Derry Journal 27/11/1933*

article, provided in a speech he made on 15 October 1931. This came shortly after the killings of Superintendent Curtin, Seán Ryan, and Carroll. In his remarks, he appeared to describe the perpetrators as "misguided" but "brave", urging the public to show them a form of "respect" typically reserved for courageous individuals. While acknowledging the severity of recent violent acts-assuming those involved were indeed responsible-he appealed to them on moral grounds to cease their activities. The editorial used these remarks to argue that Mr. de Valera had gone beyond merely understanding the I.R.A.; instead, it claimed that his true loyalty at that time appeared to rest with the republican movement rather than with the legitimate government chosen by the people.

The '*United Irishman*' then cited the 1931 Pastoral Letter issued by the Irish Bishops during a conference in Maynooth. The Church declared unequivocally that certain groups, which it described as "militarist" in nature, were actively attempting to overthrow the state through violence. These groups, the Bishops warned, sought to intimidate public officials, jurors, and ordinary citizens, and even resorted to taking lives-all of which, they stressed, ran contrary to Christian doctrine and could not be justified by appeals to "patriotism". To avoid any confusion, the Bishops specifically named the I.R.A. and Saor Éire as organisations that were "sinful" and "irreligious", declaring that no Catholic could, in good conscience, remain a member of either. The editorial argued that events following the issuance of this letter-particularly acts of violence carried out in the name of the "Republic"-only confirmed the wisdom and necessity of the Church's intervention. It condemned instances where unarmed civilians were ambushed and killed by individuals identifying as "Republican soldiers", and where others were dragged from their homes and assaulted. According to the piece, such violence was often justified with the excuse that it served the "cause of the Republic" and that anyone standing in the way of that cause had to be removed.

The article concluded by stressing the importance of all Catholic laypeople becoming well-informed about the Church's teachings on the I.R.A. It insisted that the Church did not-and never would-condone acts of "murder" or political "violence", no matter how they might be cloaked in language of national loyalty or revolutionary zeal. Finally, it called on the public to stand alongside the clergy in rejecting what it described as "extremist" publications like '*An Phoblacht*' and the "militant" ideology of groups like the I.R.A. The message was clear: there could be no place in Irish society for any movement that stood in opposition to the moral and spiritual authority of the Church-an institution, the article pointed out, that long predated either the newspaper or the armed republican organisations in question.[241]

The following week, according to the '*United Irishman*,' the Communist movement's strategy in Ireland during the early 1930s involved temporarily working alongside any "sentimental bourgeois" elements that remained within the I.R.A. This approach, it claimed, was both tactically useful and ideologically consistent with Communist thinking. The paper referenced Soviet leader Stalin's supposed position from 1927, which suggested that in certain circumstances, the "national bourgeoisie" could support a revolutionary cause, at least for a time.

The article argued that the formation of Saor Éire stemmed from a directive issued by the Communist International (Comintern) around 1930–1931. The goal was to install a leadership core that would quietly take control of the I.R.A. and related "auxiliary organisations" throughout Ireland. The first visible result was the establishment of Irish branches of the European Peasants' Committee in 1930, which were consolidated into Saor Éire the following year. Interestingly, according to the piece, the Comintern bypassed the more established but stagnant Workers' Revolutionary Groups - largely urban and lacking influence-and instead worked directly with elements of the I.R.A., which they saw as

[241] *United Irishman 2/12/1933*

having greater revolutionary potential, particularly in a country dominated by small farmers and rural labourers. Communism, the article explained, did not promote a "one-size-fits-all" approach to revolution, but rather adapted to the unique conditions of each country. In Ireland, that meant focusing on land agitation as the most viable route to social upheaval. In 1930, the Communist International placed special emphasis on agricultural societies in Europe. Ireland, as a predominantly rural country, was deemed especially suitable for this kind of focused mobilisation.

The article noted that since the time of Engels, Communists had recognised that no lasting revolution could succeed without the involvement of the rural population. A resolution from the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow was paraphrased as stating that the proletariat could not seize or maintain power without gradually gaining support-or at least neutralising resistance-from sections of the peasantry. It emphasised that Communist parties incapable of organising any peasant revolutionary activity could not be taken seriously as contenders for power. The difficulties faced by Soviet authorities in managing Russian peasant resistance, the article claimed, prompted the Comintern to craft a specific rural policy-an alliance between poor farmers and the working class. The '*United Irishman*' described this agrarian strategy-originally devised by Lenin and expanded under Stalin-as deliberately aimed at creating a clear divide between poor and better-off peasants. The approach involved promoting the confiscation of large estates and redistributing land to the landless, campaigning for tax reductions or abolition for small-holders, and promoting solidarity between landless workers and poor farmers. This process, the article argued, was designed to stir unrest and generate class hostility in rural communities, turning that discontent into open conflict that would eventually unite the "revolutionary elements" of town and countryside.

Surprisingly, the paper claimed, the Irish Free State became the first Western European state where the Communist-backed European Peasants' Committee was able to establish

a foothold. The '*United Irishman*' claimed that key figures within the I.R.A. were instrumental in setting up these branches. This, the article argued, was further evidence of co-ordination between the I.R.A. and the Comintern. The groundwork had been laid even before the organisation's official founding congress in Berlin in March 1930. It wasn't the first time, according to the paper, that Moscow had taken an interest in Irish agrarian politics. As far back as January 1928, the Comintern had sent word to Irish Communists expressing approval of plans to expand revolutionary work among small farmers and agricultural labourers. While it also welcomed an uptick in working-class activism in Irish towns, the Comintern reportedly expressed frustration at the lack of publicity in the global Communist press, blaming the Irish movement's poor media output. By late 1929 and early 1930, even before the European Peasants' Committee had been officially launched, plans were already underway in Ireland to set up local branches. This, the article insisted, strongly suggested that the collaboration between the I.R.A. and Soviet-aligned Communists was already well advanced-beginning even before the formal green light was given from Berlin.[242]

A week later, the paper claimed that plans for the first Congress of the Communist-backed European Peasants' Committee were finalised for Berlin, scheduled between the 27th and 29th of March 1930. Yet, even before that, by January of that year, it was claimed that preparations were underway in Ireland. On the 31st of January, a "provisional organising committee" was formed in Galway, tasked with agreeing a platform for national mobilisation and preparing to send an Irish delegation to the Berlin Congress. This Galway-based committee included Peadar O'Donnell of the I.R.A. headquarters staff, who acted as its secretary. According to '*An Phoblacht*' in February 1930, the committee also included Éamonn Corbett from Galway, Seán Hayes from Clare, Seán P. Carroll from Limerick, Liam O'Gorman and John Spain from Tipperary, Phil MacAuley

[242] *United Irishman 9/12/1933*

from Donegal, and Michael Galassey from Kerry. Seán O'Farrell, the I.R.A. leader in Leitrim, was later added.

Many of these individuals were active within the I.R.A., and at least some, the article alleged, were fully aware that this movement was a "direct creation" of the Communist International. Others, it conceded, may have joined without understanding the true ideological nature of the organisation. Still, the article made clear that the key instigators in the Irish wing of the European Peasants' Movement were Peadar O'Donnell and Seán Hayes - both senior I.R.A. figures, and, it suggested, fully conscious of the movement's "real character".

The Galway Committee adopted the European Peasants' Committee's platform-an indication that at least some members were already in direct contact with the organisation's executive bureau in Berlin. Domestically, they declared their main goal to be the establishment of an "independent Irish Republic" governed by "working farmers and industrial labourers". Beyond that, their programme largely echoed the typical "Communist blueprint" for triggering agrarian turmoil. O'Donnell's influence was said to be apparent in nearly all materials issued by this body and, later, by Saor Éire. From 1927 to 1933, the article claimed, he served as the chief ideologue of this supposed 'Republican-Communist' collaboration. His command of English prose was even praised - although the '*United Irishman*' lamented his tendency to indulge into what they regarded as the degenerate Marxist jargon of the time. Around the same time he was importing the European Peasants' Committee into Ireland, O'Donnell was also advocating a more radical Communist strategy for urban centres. In an appeal to Dublin workers published on 1 February 1930, he called for transforming the Irish Republican Army's Volunteers into a broad-based mass movement. He proposed the creation of workers' action groups as the organisational core for a future campaign to seize power and maintain control once it had been captured. The I.R.A., in this vision, was to become the "shock troops" of a larger revolutionary army composed of labourers. In this

new movement, he argued, the next uprising would not be carried out as "Catholics under the Bishops", but rather as "workers under working-class leadership".

Following the Galway meeting, arrangements were made for an Irish Congress to be held on 23 March-again in Galway-as well as for Irish delegates to attend the Berlin Congress of the European Peasants' Committee. '*An Phoblacht*' on 8 March published the agenda and a report distributed by the European Peasants' Committee's executive bureau in preparation for the event. According to the '*United Irishman*,' this report reviewed developments across Europe and detailed the efforts underway-particularly in Poland-to suppress the Committee's activities. The article insisted that the document bore, in every line, the unmistakable mark of Moscow's influence.[243]

Just ahead of Christmas 1933, the paper once again struck on the association of the IRA and Communism, referring to Saor Éire and other initiatives. According to the paper, following Peadar O'Donnell's glowing depiction of Ireland's revolutionary potential at the Berlin headquarters of the European Peasants' Committee, there was growing impatience among the leadership when tangible progress in Ireland remained limited. As a result, a representative from the Berlin Secretariat was dispatched to Ireland in May to assess the situation firsthand and accelerate developments. The agent's subsequent report, couched in the usual mechanical rhetoric of the Third International, still offered insights into how things stood. He noted favourably the increasing "proletarian spirit" within the I.R.A., and the mounting class divisions that were, in his eyes, fracturing the national movement into two opposing forces: labourers and the "bourgeoisie". He reinforced the line being pushed at the time by O'Donnell, Frank Ryan, and others-that the "petty bourgeoisie" had exhausted its revolutionary potential and was now drifting towards "British Imperialism". In short, the agent concluded that Ireland's property-owning class had shifted into the role of a "counter-revolutionary" bloc.

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[243] *United Ireland 16/12/1933*

Although the Irish section of the European Peasants' Committee remained relatively small in number, the agent nonetheless viewed it as strategically important. He considered its membership-largely drawn from the IRA-well placed to act as a focal point for a broader class conflict in Ireland. Their dual role in both the national and class-based movements was, in his view, their chief strength. That the group had drawn the ire of the Irish "bourgeoisie", who now labelled them "Communistic", was seen as a promising indication of their radical potential.

It was claimed by the paper that numerous concrete tactics and strategies were proposed by the Berlin Bureau to galvanise the Irish movement. These included calls to resist paying taxes to government bodies, the organisation of district and national congresses, and the use of local village meetings to spread propaganda. Other proposals included a co-ordinated press campaign through newspapers and bulletins, as well as educational initiatives like short courses for agitators and organisers. One such initiative, the Workers' College on Eccles Street in Dublin, was established shortly afterwards in line with these recommendations. Allegedly, Berlin also encouraged tighter coordination between the Irish and European arms of the movement through correspondence and official visits. Yet of all the Bureau's suggestions, the most central was the creation of a "Revolutionary Workers' Party" aligned with both the I.R.A. and the Peasants' Committee. Without such a political vanguard, the success of the revolutionary campaign was seen as unlikely. Overall, however, the Berlin agent expressed approval of the tactics already being pursued by the Irish branch of the movement. Coinciding with this push from Berlin, O'Donnell and other 'Republican-Communist' figures began consistently repeating these same themes in public forums. At a James Connolly memorial event in Dublin on 12 May - chaired by known Communist, Donal O'Reilly-O'Donnell, presenting himself as part of the "vanguard of the peasant movement", addressed the assembled workers. He called for the establishment and defence of an "Irish Workers' Republic", founded on the principle that power must rest with both the

working farmers and the urban proletariat - echoing resolutions passed at the Peasant Conference in Galway. It was also claimed that, from that point forward, '*An Phoblacht*' became increasingly dominated by the language and aims of this supposedly newly invigorated "revolutionary republicanism".

According to this writer in '*The United Irishman*,' the I.R.A. of the early 1930s had all but abandoned Pearse as a central figure of inspiration. While names like Wolfe Tone and James Connolly were still ceremonially invoked, the author argued that the movement's real ideological loyalty had shifted toward Moscow - specifically, toward Lenin and Stalin. In the view expressed by this writer, these Soviet leaders had effectively become the movement's guiding lights. The writer pointed to Peadar O'Donnell's participation in the December session of the European Peasants' Committee in Berlin, as evidence. On returning to Ireland, O'Donnell reportedly presented a platform to the I.R.A. that, according to the article, aimed to "transfer power from the capitalist class to the working class." '*The United Irishman*' suggested this was a deliberate attempt to import Soviet ideology under the guise of Irish independence. The article further claimed that efforts were made to encourage rural communities in Clare, Mayo, and Kerry to view themselves as part of an international revolutionary movement, with solidarity extended to "comrades" in Germany, Poland, and the Netherlands. To the author, this appeared artificial and ideologically driven rather than grounded in the actual needs or desires of Irish farmers. The writer took a strongly critical tone towards O'Donnell and his associates, accusing them of whitewashing the reality of life under Stalin. While they portrayed the Soviet Union as a model of justice and progress, they reportedly failed to acknowledge the widespread purges, political repression, or the regime's official hostility toward religion. These issues, the article claimed, were never addressed in the speeches delivered by leading I.R.A. figures such as O'Donnell, Ryan, Gilmore, McGuinness, McCool, and others.

In the writer's view, this silence was no accident but a strategic omission. '*The United Irishman*' portrayed these figures as carefully concealing the darker realities of Communism in order to gain public support. The author accused them of masking a fascination with totalitarianism beneath the language of justice, suggesting that their politics were driven not only by a desire for social reform, but also through an unsettling admiration for ideological ruthlessness.

The '*United Irishman*' article described how the Working Farmers' Movement expanded into counties such as Galway, Clare, Carlow, Wexford, Limerick and Tipperary in 1931. The key organisers were said to include Peadar O'Donnell, Sean Hayes, Martin Fahy, John Lynch (then Mayor of Sligo), and Tom Honan. Despite their efforts, the article contended that the movement failed to generate significant momentum. According to the writer, the economic conditions of the time meant that most farmers were not desperate enough to be drawn into a radical class struggle. Pamphlets filled with news from faraway places like Poland and Germany were unlikely, in the writer's view, to influence farmers who rarely left their own counties. The tone and content of the movement's propaganda allegedly appeared alien and overly ideological. The writer argued that for the average Irish farmer, the campaign felt disconnected from local realities. Its language and goals seemed borrowed from foreign revolutions rather than rooted in Ireland's own traditions. As a result, the movement was perceived-according to this analysis-as overly "red" and too abstract to resonate with its intended audience.

The article then noted a strategic rebranding in July 1931, when the movement adopted the name Saor Éire. This was described as an attempt to make a Soviet-backed initiative appear more Irish and culturally nationalist in character. According to the writer in '*The United Irishman*,' this change of name did not reflect any real shift in the movement's ideological core.

Instead, the article argued, Saor Éire marked the most ambitious effort yet by the I.R.A. to launch a revolutionary

movement, under the alleged patronage of the Communist International. The '*United Irishman*' described the newly branded organisation as a local expression of an international strategy, guided and supported by foreign actors in Berlin and Moscow. The writer concluded that the networks established through the European Peasants' Committee remained active well beyond this period. In their view, these links helped entrench Communist influence within the leadership of the I.R.A., leaving a legacy that extended beyond the headlines of the early 1930s.[244]

In a January 1934 editorial published by the '*United Ireland*' newspaper - a publication consistently critical of radical republicanism - the editors reflected on the story of the Saor Éire movement, and condemned it in the strongest possible terms. The editorial focused on a policy statement issued by Saor Éire headquarters, which had accompanied the organisation's constitution, and was later circulated as a pamphlet. According to the paper, this document sought to analyse the national situation but did so entirely from a Communist standpoint, one which the editors claimed aligned closely with the doctrines of the Third International.

The editorial accused the movement of perceiving the national struggle of 1916–1921 in class terms, stripping it of its supposedly patriotic significance, as they defined such. Saor Éire, according to the newspaper, had portrayed the fight for independence as nothing more than an effort to establish a native capitalist economy in the interests of the Irish middle classes. It further claimed that the 1919 Dáil was manipulated as a tool of these same capitalist forces, used to suppress a revolutionary working-class uprising. The Treaty split was framed by Saor Éire, the editorial claimed, as the final victory of the bourgeoisie. Particularly inflammatory, from the paper's point of view, was a line in the pamphlet suggesting the Irish Catholic hierarchy had played a "specially vicious" role in this outcome - something '*United Ireland*' viewed as an attack against the Church.

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[244] *United Ireland 23/12/1933*

The editorial went on to list members of the Saor Éire National Executive, claiming that most were former I.R.A. or Cumann na mBán leaders. Among them were prominent names such as Peadar O'Donnell, Helena Moloney, May Laverty, Sean McGuinness and Tom Maguire of Co. Westmeath. The paper expressed alarm that five members had visited Soviet Russia, with two attending courses in Marxist political education. It also alleged that other influential I.R.A. figures-such as Seán MacBride and Michael Price-were heavily involved in the organisation, though not officially part of the Executive. MacBride was quoted as declaring that:

> *"Saor Éire had been founded to organise and consolidate the republic of Ireland on the basis of the administration and possession by the workers and toiling farmers, of the land, instruments of production, distribution and exchange… The means by which these objects could be achieved were by organising committees of action among the industrial and agricultural workers… Behind a revolutionary government for the overthrow of British Imperialism in Ireland and the organisation of a Workers' and Working Farmers' Republic."*

The editorial described an intensive propaganda campaign conducted by Saor Éire in the autumn of that year, accusing the group of attempting to spread a full-blooded Communist agenda under the guise of patriotism. The paper singled out a meeting in Cork City on 14th October 1931 as emblematic of this effort. There, Peadar O'Donnell shared a platform with Seán Murray, head of the original Communist Party of Ireland, and Shapurji Saklatvala, a British-Indian Communist and senior figure in both the Anti-Imperialist League and the Comintern. According to the editorial, Saklatvala lectured the audience in praise of Soviet Russia, while Murray appealed directly to Irish workers to rise in revolutionary unity. O'Donnell, in the editors' view, softened the message by mixing it with nationalist rhetoric tailored to local sentiment-a tactic the paper derided as manipulative. Ultimately, the editorial celebrated the ultimate collapse of Saor Éire,

attributing its downfall not only to the enforcement of the Public Safety Act but, more decisively, to its formal denunciation by the Irish Catholic hierarchy. For the editors of '*United Ireland*,' this condemnation had exposed the group's true nature, and shattered any illusions about its intentions. They concluded that, after this, Saor Éire lost all credibility, and could no longer function as a serious political force by 1934.[245]

[245] *United Irishman 6/1/1934*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

AN PHOBLACHT, SATURDAY, 3rd OCTOBER, 1931. 5

The Clarion Call of Saor Eire

WHY IRELAND'S WORKERS AND WORKING FARMERS MUST ORGANISE TO UNDO THE CONQUEST

The Proclamation of 1916, asserting anew again the inalienable sovereignty of this nation, challenged British rule in Ireland and stated its challenge and its will.

On that Proclamation we take our stand and we call to this "incorruptible contention of the tradition and struggle" to collect around containers of themselves so that we may more solidly forward to our battle-ground.

James Connolly, defining the goal towards which he was struggling, wrote: "An Irish Republic based upon the public ownership by the people of the land and instruments of production, distribution and exchange." In 1913 Irish Freedom meaning to the class content of the rising revolutionary struggle was:

The primary evil is the English occupation and the cleansing of Ireland from British Imperialism involves the abolition of the inhuman and degrading social system."

The development of the post-1916 policy was the triumph of the Arthur Griffith school, which aimed at achieving, not the abolition of the inhuman and degrading social system, but a separation from England as a means towards building a native Irish capitalist economy and a policy representing the aims of the Irish middle class.

The extent of this triumph was revealed in the Dail Eireann of 1922 which set its face against all tendency towards direct action by the masses to reapiere their inheritance. It did worse, for while public utterances were full of fine revolutionary phrases and gestures towards the splendid militancy of the masses, the practices of the Government were in conflict with these phrases. The small farmers and landless men demanded the restoration of the ranches, they demanded relief from rent, and in these vital issues the Government betrayed them.

Sensing the danger of openly resisting the demand for restoration of the land the Republican Government created a department to effect the distribution of the ranches and their distribution among the small farmers and landless who would be satisfied with the burden of repayment. Landlordism was enforced and we had the extraordinary spectacle of a country where the mass of the people had relinquished foreign rule, where British ports were boycotted, where police were being attacked and guerilla warfare against British troops was continuous, paying to the Exchequer of the British Government rents amounting to four millions annually rented from the Irish farming community. At the same time we had exports in America begging funds for the support of the Irish revolutionary fighters.

Republican courts came into existence and they became a machine for hearing the demands of banks, insurances, landlords; and so the State machine then grew up within the revolution was used, on the one hand, to attack the forces of British Imperialism, and, on the other, to achieve the domination of Irish Capitalism over the lives of the masses of the people. And the Republican Government was conscious of its rôle. We find: "Terrified landowners flocked to Dublin to beseech protection from Dail Eireann." "There seemed a distinct when nothing could prevent the wholesale expropriation (of the landless and estates), but the crisis was surmounted." — (Constructive Work, Dail Eireann No. 1.) Dail Eireann became, not the leadership of the revolutionary masses which were out for freedom, but the champion of native exploiting interests which were out to use the courage and sacrifice of the I.R.A. to wring concessions for themselves from British Imperialism. The Treaty of 1921 embodied these concessions. The struggle against the Treaty represented the instinctive nationalist revolt against inclusion in the British Empire and against the betrayal of the promises of social reconstruction popularised in the Tan days. But the new leadership that arose in 1922 was utterly unable to state the betrayal sharply and to develop struggles by which tenancy could be effectively exposed and resisted so that the demagogues of the Empire were able to spread confusion into the very ranks of the militant fighters. In this treacherous misrepresentation of the values in the Treaty it should be put on record that the Irish Hierarchy played a part of special viciousness in their attacks on Republicans and that by their attacks on their sacred office they rallied masses of the Irish people temporarily on the side of the British Empire.

The burdens the Treaty imposed were disastrous. Besides over five millions annually to be paid into the British Exchequer, it imposed the cost of two Governments machines, one in Belfast and one in Dublin. In the Twenty-Six Counties it brought forward a new ruling class with special powers for exploitation, and the standard of living of small farmers and industrial workers worsens steadily, as the following analysis will reveal.

Present Outlook

Shortly after the end of the Imperialist World War the period of temporary agricultural prosperity ended and a period of continuous set-back set in.

The agricultural community found itself faced with a continuous fall in the price of agricultural products while the cost of living remained relatively high. On top of this farmers had borrowed money from the banks (which at the time encouraged speculation in land) during a period of inflation to meet the expansion of tillage during the war years and now found themselves heavily in debt, compelled to meet interest and repay loans in face of a falling market. It is estimated that the total volume of farming indebtedness up to the year 1920 and excluding land purchase advances is £20,000,000—(League of Nations Economic Committee.)

The prices of agricultural products have fallen from 297.8 in 1920 to 124.8 in 1930 (100 in 1914), while the cost of living fell only from 221 in 1925 to 166 in January, 1931. Between 1929 and 1930 the position has taken on the nature of a crisis. The index figure for their period declined by 14½ points, which is equivalent to an average decrease of 15 per cent.

The Land Act of 1923 and the whole policy of the Free State Government presses upon the small farmer. The Act of 1923, in effect, confirmed their ownership in the ranches to the grasiers and big farmer element. The "big farmer" policy and the rationalisation of agriculture in his favour is sweeping east and westward on the small man. Consolidation of farms is in progress leading up to a new widespread landlordism and an reconstruction of rural peasantry.

In 1911 the number of separate holdings under thirty acres was 290,000, 1926 the number was 292,000, and figures will show that almost three-quarters of the agricultural land in Ireland is held by approximately over a fifth of the occupiers.

Distribution of Agricultural Workers

The Census of 1926 shows that in the Twenty-Six Counties 672,129 persons were engaged in agriculture. Of these, 281,468 lived on holdings under thirty acres while 130,739 lived on holdings under fifteen acres and 126,400 were agricultural labourers.

Out of a total of 320,744 holdings in the Free State, 107,218 or 64.1 per cent. of the total were under 15 acres, constituting only 6.4 per cent. of the total area, while 220,092, or 68.4 per cent. of the total holdings were under 30 acres, constituting only 20 per cent. of the total area. In other words 64.3 per cent. of the total holdings took 20 per cent. of the land, while 35.7 took 80 per cent., which means that two-thirds of the total agricultural workers (excluding farm labourers) lived on one-fifth of the land.

In the Six Counties, holdings of under 15 acres, while constituting 42 per cent. of the total number of holdings, represent only 11.7 per cent. of the total area, while holdings of over 100 acres though representing only 0.9 per cent of the total number of holdings accounts for 12.6 per cent. of the total acreage.

The analysis does not give the real picture, for a very large percentage of the small holdings are situate in the poorest and least productive parts of the country.

If we consider in relation to this the position of the 126,400 agricultural labourers in the Twenty-Six Counties and the 40,000 in the Six Counties we see to what a pitch of exploitation the system has brought the agricultural community and get a glimpse of the failure of the various Land Acts to deal with the situation.

Agricultural Production

Concurrently with a progressive decline in population here gross a decrease in the volume of agricultural production—the volume of exports having fallen considerably below pre-war figures. Vast quantities of land have gone to grass from cultivation while the quantity of live stock has not increased.

The following figures show decrease in the production of some of the principal crops since 1871:—

	1871	1911	1929	1930
Potatoes	2,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Turnips	200,000	250,000	150,000	175,000
Mangolds	50,000	25,000	10,000	10,000
Cabbage	50,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Oats	1,250,000	900,000	600,000	641,000
Barley	310,000	150,000	115,000	105,000
Wheat	300,000	150,000	100,000	90,000
Flax	75,000	25,000	6,000	4,000

In the Free State the area of ploughed land has decreased from 2,772,000 acres in 1871 to 1,458,000 in 1930 while the area under hay has increased in the same period from 1,400,000 to 2,700,000 acres. The decrease has been progressive, for in 1911 the area of ploughed land was 1,697,000 acres, while in 1926 it was 1,251,000 acres. Since the establishment of the Free State 250,000 acres have gone to grass from cultivation. The total area under cultivation in the Six Counties has declined between the years 1911 and 1926 by 78,000 acres, showing a decrease of 46,000 acres between the four years 1924-28.

With the decrease in tillage and the consequent increase in pasturage there has not gone any increase in the numbers of live stock. The number of milch cows is almost at the same level as 1871 and shows a progressive decrease since 1921. Other cattle in the Free State show an even greater decrease since 1921, while the numbers of sheep and pigs are considerably below the figures for sixty years ago.

The agricultural statistics for the Free State for the year June, 1929, to June, 1930, show a decrease of 4.1 per cent., in the total area of ploughed land on the preceding year, while for the same period the total area under corn, root and green crops for the whole of Ireland decreased by 91,210 acres. North and South, the conditions point to an even further decrease in live stock, because the farmer must sell his stock to meet his obligations, and to the poorer farmers who are already undernourished it will mean that the reserve annually required for the necessary increase in stock cannot be made owing to the larger share of the product being required to meet rents, annuities, and bank debts, and the adverse balance in agriculture shown in the contradiction between agricultural prices and the cost of living. For the rancher and big farmer relying mainly on cattle-raising, affairs have been satisfactory up to recently, for the price of his product held while costs and charges had not greatly increased. Cattle accounted for 21 per cent. of the total value of the gross output of Free State agriculture in 1926-27, and in 1931 the exports of live stock represented 46 per cent. or nearly half the value of the total exports.

The Census of Production for 1926 showed a total of over £38,000,000, of which £64,750,000 represented agricultural production. Of this £36,000,000 the total amount paid to wage-earners in both agriculture and industry amounted to about £20,000,000. If we assume an average income of 20/- per week for each member of the 285,000 persons constituting the total working farmer population living on holdings of 30 acres and under, we get a total income at approximately £18,200,000. The total share, then, of the wage-earning classes and the working farmers was about £38,200,000. Write off the £9,000,000 for taxation (it was more) and this leaves £30,000,000. The other £35,000,000 went to the big employing farmer, to the commercial, industrial and financial profits, in annuities, taxes, rents, and was generally dispersed among the exploiting interests.

The British and Irish bond-holders in annuities (interest on land loans) take £3,200,000 annually as a charge from agriculture. Add to this £1,500,000 rents on unexpired land and we get a total of almost £5,000,000 from the Twenty-Six Counties alone. Since the establishment of the Free State close upon £20,000,000 has been dragged from the workers and working farmers of the Twenty-Six Counties by the bond-holders.

Of the loans issued under the various Land Acts the total amount still outstanding is approximately £100,000,000.

In the collection of these annuities the Free State Government acts as agent for the bond-holder. In the year ended the 31st March the total of annuity payers in the Free State was 298,930 and the total amount collectible for that year, adding arrears

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE

IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and rallies for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having resolutely perfected her discipline, having resolved ready for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished that right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty: six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades in arms in the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to and hereby claims the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God. Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves our cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

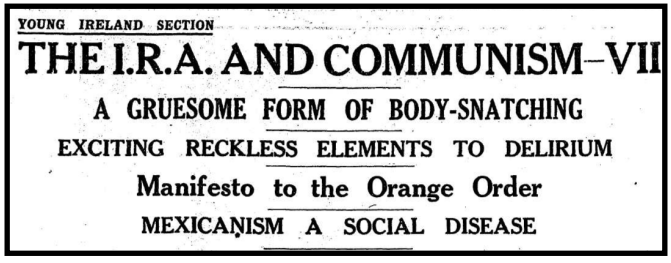
Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA. P. H. PEARSE.
JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

THOMAS MacDONAGH.
EAMONN CEANNT.

DOWN WITH UNEMPLOYMENT! DOWN WITH WAGE CUTS!

"The Clarion Call of Saor Éire," as it appeared in the IRA's 'An Phoblacht' paper.



YOUNG IRELAND SECTION

THE I.R.A. AND COMMUNISM–VII

A GRUESOME FORM OF BODY-SNATCHING

EXCITING RECKLESS ELEMENTS TO DELIRIUM

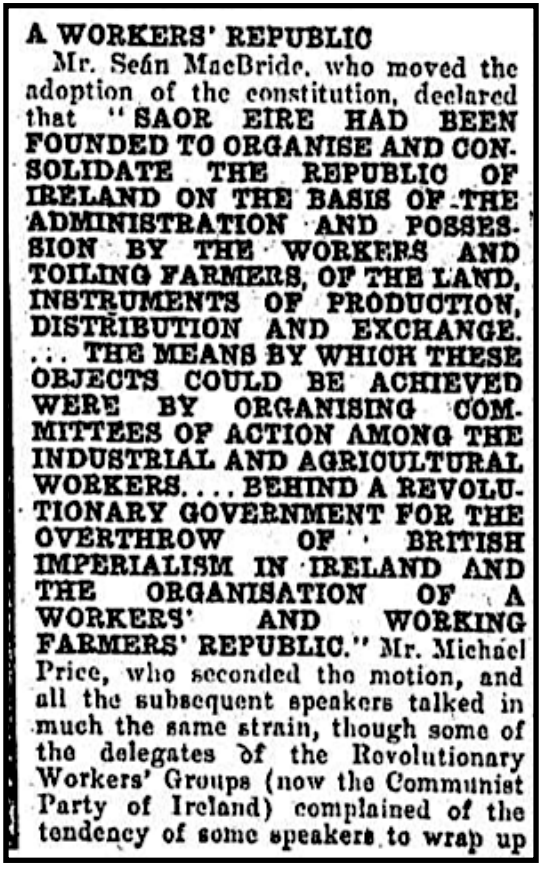
Manifesto to the Orange Order

MEXICANISM A SOCIAL DISEASE

The 'United Irishman' newspaper ran a dedicated series on the IRA's allegedly communist agenda.
(Photo source: United Irishman 24/10/1933)

Shapurji Saklatvala (1874-1936), the first British Labour MP of Indian heritage (elected in Battersea North) addressed a meeting of Saor Éire in Cork City centre, during October 1931. By this time, he was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and, as per the IRA's 'An Phoblacht' organ, approximately 5,000 people were in attendance.
(Photo source: National Portrait Gallery UK)

Commandant 'Davie' Fitzgerald of the IRA's General Headquarters (GHQ) was elected national secretary of Saor Éire at the National Convention of 1930.
(Photo source: An Phoblacht 9/9/1933)



A WORKERS' REPUBLIC

Mr. Seán MacBride, who moved the adoption of the constitution, declared that "**SAOR EIRE HAD BEEN FOUNDED TO ORGANISE AND CONSOLIDATE THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ON THE BASIS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND POSSESSION BY THE WORKERS AND TOILING FARMERS, OF THE LAND, INSTRUMENTS OF PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE. . . . THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE OBJECTS COULD BE ACHIEVED WERE BY ORGANISING COMMITTEES OF ACTION AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS. . . . BEHIND A REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT FOR THE OVERTHROW OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN IRELAND AND THE ORGANISATION OF A WORKERS' AND WORKING FARMERS' REPUBLIC.**" Mr. Michael Price, who seconded the motion, and all the subsequent speakers talked in much the same strain, though some of the delegates of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups (now the Communist Party of Ireland) complained of the tendency of some speakers to wrap up

IRA leader Sean MacBride set out the 'modus operandi' of the Saor Éire political platform. (Source: United Irishman 6/1/1934)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE 'BOYCOTT BRITISH' CAMPAIGN

In its article "Clearing the Decks" from early July of 1932, '*An Phoblacht*' expressed its views on the centrality of the land struggle to Ireland's conflict with Britain. The paper argued that British interests were attempting to "stampede and bulldoze the working farmers," and maintained that only committees of working farmers could stabilise rural Ireland and mobilise the mass of the rural population. It asserted that the fight against British imperialism required absolute commitment, with no compromise or half-measures, and that suspension of evictions and forced sales should extend to restoring families who had been dispossessed over the past decade. The article described these displaced families and "wounded soldiers" of the land struggle as tests of comradeship, whose welfare would reflect the capacity of revolutionaries to build for the future. The paper observed that, following a period of comparative calm, working farmers had begun to resist landlord demands and focus on sustaining home economies. Nonetheless, it argued that British interests continued to exert economic pressure, spreading rumours to depress cattle prices and manipulate the Irish cattle trade. '*An Phoblacht*' claimed that rural conditions were worsening, with agricultural and economic crises deepening, and stressed that working farmer committees had to confront these realities while mobilising resources and labour effectively. It highlighted rural youth as an emerging force, capable of applying technical knowledge and energy to manage land and production, rather than perpetuating the inefficiencies of the old order.

'*An Phoblacht*' had outlined a comprehensive vision for revolutionary action: machinery and credit would be placed under committee administration, rents on worked land would be abolished, food prices fixed, and industries of national importance revived. It advocated for the active participation of volunteers, revolutionary workers, and working farmer committees as "shock troops" of the struggle, undertaking

the hardest work and sacrifices to achieve Irish freedom. The paper presented this struggle as urgent, framing it as a choice between advance - seizing control of Ireland for workers and small farmers - or retreat, which would lead to "panic, demoralisation, ruin." The article also connected rural and domestic concerns to wider anti-British economic sentiment. It highlighted public support for disbanding the C.I.D. in Ireland, portrayed industrial grievances such as shipbuilding competition with Great Britain, and called for consumer activism, exemplified by a slogan to "Boycott British Ships." Collectively, the paper's views combined the practical concerns of agrarian struggle with broader nationalist and anti-imperial economic activism, portraying revolutionary organisation as essential to securing both social justice and true national independence.[246]

The '*Anglo-Celt*' newspaper had reported in July 1932 that posters were erected around Dublin City at night-time, declaring "Boycott British Goods," but were forcibly removed by the police.[247]

In October 1932, the '*United Irishman*' expressed alarm over a report that the Cork Industrial Development Association had voted to appoint two representatives to the Boycott British Goods League. While some sources referred to this group as the Anti-Imperialist League, the editorial dismissed any distinction, arguing that both belonged to what it called a "cluster of organisations" closely tied to the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) and the allegedly rebranded Saor Éire movement. The editorial asserted that these organisations were not independent grassroots initiatives but were, in fact, being co-ordinated by the same individuals operating across multiple fronts. According to the paper, these figures were carrying out a campaign modelled on directives from the International Communist Party. The Boycott British campaign, it argued, was merely a smokescreen for a broader revolutionary agenda, with its ultimate aim described as the

[246] *An Phoblacht 9/7/1932*

[247] *Anglo-Celt 23/12/1932*

establishment of a Bolshevik-style state in Ireland. The '*United Irishman*' stated that it had previously warned the public about this connection, and re-affirmed its belief that the campaign's supposed culturally nationalist and economic goals were deceptive. It criticised the Cork Industrial Development Association harshly, accusing it, whether knowingly or not, of aiding Communist and anarchist objectives by affiliating with the Boycott League. Although the paper acknowledged that it knew little about the Association beyond the reported news item, it questioned the judgment behind the decision. It expressed incredulity that such an organisation would knowingly support what it described as a subversive cause. The editorial noted with approval that Senator Dowdall had himself expressed unease about the Association's move, though it also took the opportunity to mock the phrasing of his remarks. Ultimately, the '*United Irishman*' dismissed the economic justification for the boycott effort, characterising its public message as merely destructive, also with a supposed hidden agenda aimed at subjugating national organisations under the influence of Saor Éire.[248]

At a December 1932 public meeting of the Army Comrades Association (the original incarnation of what would become known as the 'Blueshirts,' firstly composed of veterans of the National Army), senior figures in the organisation sharply criticised the Irish Republican Army and expressed concern over what they described as a dangerous infiltration of Communist ideology into certain nationalist campaigns. Colonel J. Ryan addressed the audience, stating that the A.C.A. represented the people of Ireland-those who had, a decade earlier, given their democratic support to the Free State. He reflected on the I.R.A. of the past, which he regarded as a very different body from its prevailing form. While he acknowledged that some honourable individuals might still have remained within its ranks, he believed they were being misled by those who, in his view, held no real allegiance to Ireland, or to any nation. He also criticised groups such as the "Boycott British Goods" League, claiming

[248] *United Irishman 29/10/1932*

that its leadership included the same individuals responsible for spreading Communist propaganda through the I.R.A. Although he expressed no personal concern for Britain or other foreign powers, he questioned the patriotism of those involved in the campaign, and warned the public about their influence. He urged all loyal citizens to join the A.C.A. in defence of the democratic order. National Army General Seán McKeown, who also spoke at the event, recalled the foundation of the Free State Constitution ten years earlier and described how it had been established and defended by force of arms. He argued that the democratic gains of the early 1920s were now facing a new and more serious threat-one that, in his view, surpassed even the dangers of the Civil War period. McKeown asserted that the legitimacy of the State and the will of the people were being undermined by subversive elements working under the guise of nationalism, but driven by anti-democratic ideologies. He commended the A.C.A. for its efforts to counter these forces and called for continued public support to safeguard what they described as Ireland's constitutional democracy.[249]

The '*Irish Workers' Voice*' seemingly equated any opposition to the 'Boycott British Goods' campaign with that of anti-Communism. In January 1933, it criticised Labour TD for Cork West, T. J. Murphy, for what it described as his growing hostility towards Communism and revolutionary working-class political initiatives. The paper recalled a recent speech in which Murphy had urged the government to take action against Communist leaders - remarks the '*Voice*' denounced as reactionary and aligned with the interests of the political establishment. According to the political paper, T.J. Murphy's true political allegiances were supposedly laid bare during a meeting of the West Cork Board of Assistance. At that meeting, the Board received a letter of protest from the local branch of the Boycott British League, objecting to the Board's decision to invite tenders for the purchase of English coal. Rather than engage with the substance of the protest, Murphy reportedly dismissed the letter as "insulting," arguing that the Board's intentions were above reproach and

[249] *Cork Examiner 7/12/1932*

motivated solely by "honest dealing." T.J. Murphy further declared his opposition to all forms of boycott, stating that he looked forward to a time when Ireland's internal difficulties would be resolved and peaceful, harmonious relations with England could be restored. He suggested that such relations would be beneficial to Ireland, particularly in trade and other exchanges. The '*Irish Workers' Voice*' framed Murphy's remarks as evidence of a supposed pro-British orientation within sections of the Labour Party, and accused him of somehow turning his back on the anti-imperialist and working-class struggle. The editorial implied that Murphy's rhetoric served to discredit genuine political opposition to British economic dominance, and ignored the broader political motivations behind campaigns like the boycott.[250]

In a striking editorial published during March 1933, the '*Derry Journal*' took a firm and unequivocal stance against what it described as the "insidious spread" of Communist ideology within the Irish Free State. The editorial reflected the anxieties of the time, particularly among conservative nationalists who viewed Communism not only as politically dangerous, but also as fundamentally incompatible with Catholicism and Irish sovereignty. The newspaper pointed to the actions of organised groups of young men and women in Dublin who had taken it upon themselves to break up Communist meetings, and to also disrupt the activities of revolutionary left-wing associations. These confrontations, according to the editorial, underscored the urgent need for decisive Government intervention.

The editorial warned that their influence far exceeded their size. It alleged that these groups operated clubrooms used for spreading "Bolshevist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Christian literature," and claimed that public resistance to their presence was not only justified but commendable. The editorial proposed several actions the Government ought to take. Chief among them was a ban on the importation of all Communist literature, as well as the prohibition of its printing within the Free State. It also advocated for

[250] *Irish Workers' Voice 7/1/1933*

legislation to criminalise the public advocacy of Communist doctrines, arguing that the right to free speech should not extend to those who sought the destruction of religious and national values. Even more dangerous than public meetings, the editorial claimed, was the "treacherously insidious" way in which individual Communists had infiltrated national organisations. According to the '*Derry Journal*,' Communist activists had embedded themselves within otherwise respected movements, such as the Prisoners' Release Committees, the Boycott British Goods campaign, and various Anti-Imperialist groups. It even alleged that the I.R.A. itself had been compromised, citing '*An Phoblacht*' as evidence that Communist influence had reached its leadership.

The editorial was also explicit in its ideological claim: That Communism and Nationalism were, in fact, fundamentally incompatible. Communism, it argued, was internationalist by nature, committed to erasing national borders and replacing religious values with a godless materialism. It stood for a vague concept of the "brotherhood of man," which, to the '*Derry Journal*,' had undermined the particularism and sovereignty that Nationalism required. No individual, the paper stated, could truly be both a Communist and a Nationalist - nor a Communist and a Catholic. Those Communists who had joined national organisations were doing so, the editorial argued, either through ignorance of their own ideology or for "sinister purposes." In either case, their continued presence was intolerable. The '*Derry Journal*' concluded that any national body that tolerated Communist membership was betraying the very idea of the nation, and declared that if such organisations refused to expel their Communist members, it was the patriotic duty of all sincere Nationalists to withdraw from them. "There is no middle course," the editorial warned. For the '*Derry Journal*,' the time had come for Ireland to choose: Nationalism or Communism - but not both.[251]

[251] *Derry Journal 31/3/1933*

'*An Phoblacht*' reported at the end of September that in addition to the protests published elsewhere, several of Fianna Fáil's local cumanns had demanded political treatment for the imprisoned members of the 'Boycott British' campaign. They also called for a complete embargo on British goods. The various Cumainn making these demands included Glen Coole (Thurles), Cloontia, Ballaghadereen, Midleton in County Cork, the Erskine Childers Cumann in Dublin, and the East Cork Comhairle Ceanntair.[252]

In early October, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that the Boycott British campaign, which had been launched by Republicans against various British commodities, supposedly claimed a significant victory when the Fianna Fáil Government withdrew preferential tariffs from a number of goods of British origin. This concession was secured after determined agitation, despite the government's reluctance to explain why such preferences had been granted in the first place, at a time when Britain was openly attempting to cripple Ireland's economic life. The cost of this success, the article claimed, had been borne by activists. Several League members were imprisoned and treated as common criminals rather than political prisoners. In protest, and to draw public attention to the cause, a number of young men embarked on a hunger strike, fasting for seventeen days. These sacrifices, both inside and outside the jails, was ultimately vindicated when public opinion, inflamed by the League's campaign, forced the government to yield ground and strip British goods of their preferential treatment. Yet the League editorialised that partial measures were not enough. Why, they asked, should only a handful of items be affected? Why not a full embargo on all British imports? At a time when some voices urged compromise and an end to the economic struggle, the League insisted that the nation's duty lay in pursuing justice and freedom with determination, defiance, and victory as its guiding principles. By that stage, the boycott campaign had spread across the country, with particular focus on Bass ale. At the request of numerous licensed traders, and to prevent

[252] *An Phoblacht 30/9/1933*

unfair competition, representatives of the League began compiling lists of publicans who pledged not to re-stock British ales once existing supplies were exhausted. The campaign was not limited to trade. The League accused British newspapers of running deliberate misrepresentations about Irish political events, often issuing two editions - one tailored for Irish circulation and another for home and foreign readers. It argued that its activities must subsequently expand to counteract what it described as poisonous imperialist propaganda.

In County Cork, Mallow publicans and those in surrounding districts were visited by League members, who urged them to refrain from selling or advertising British ales. In Cork City, members carried out extensive activity: notices were served on publicans warning against the future sale of British beer, while walls and hoardings across the city were painted with "Boycott British Goods" slogans. In Midleton, licensed houses were warned against re-stocking Bass or displaying its advertisements. In Youghal, the main streets and adjoining roads were covered in boycott slogans. Skibbereen saw similar efforts, with walls and approach roads painted to carry the League's message. In County Mayo, Ballina activists visited hotels and public houses before closing time, asking proprietors to sign undertakings not to stock Bass or other British ales once their current supplies ran out. In every case, they were well received, though police and C.I.D. agents followed their movements closely. In County Clare, members of the League visited twenty-two public houses in Scariff, where proprietors were requested to remove Bass signs and to refrain from restocking once current supplies were finished. The response was positive, with publicans offering wholehearted support. In Feakle, ten houses were visited, with similar promises secured. Walls and roads around both Scariff and Feakle were quickly emblazoned with fresh boycott slogans.[253]

A public meeting under the auspices of the Boycott British League was held in Killarney, County Kerry, during October

[253] *An Phoblacht 7/10/1933*

1933, primarily in protest against the arrest and detention of several of its members. Prior to the commencement of proceedings, approximately 200 men entered the town in military formation, and later joined a large crowd assembled for the meeting. Presiding over the event, Mr. Joe Daly stated that the gathering was intended as a strong protest against what he described as the unjust imprisonment of those engaged in the League's campaign. Mr. Tom Barry, the noted I.R.A. commander and a prominent speaker on the night, addressed the crowd, beginning with a message of solidarity from the imprisoned members being held in Cork Jail. He informed attendees that the detainees remained in good spirits and were committed to continuing their efforts upon release. Barry argued that the Boycott British League had been established as a necessary response to what he characterised as continued British economic aggression against Ireland. He maintained that the Irish Government had failed to adequately defend Irish interests, particularly in the context of British restrictions on Irish exports, while British goods were being freely, and in some cases preferentially, imported into Ireland. He asserted that those currently imprisoned were acting under orders in pursuit of national independence, and that the boycott campaign was not an end in itself, but rather a tactic aimed at achieving the restoration of the Irish Republic. Barry stated that he would not support the campaign if it were merely economic in nature, but stood firmly by it as part of a broader Republican objective. The speaker reaffirmed the Irish Republican Army's support for the imprisoned men and for the League's actions, expressing pride in the role the organisation had played. He outlined the Republican vision of an Ireland that was free from foreign domination, with full control of its national affairs returned to the people. The meeting had experienced occasional interruptions. At one point, a heckler who questioned Barry's motives was forcibly removed. Later, Barry also addressed the frequent accusations of Communism directed at the movement, dismissing them. He contended that their goals were mainly based on the belief that Irish independence would only be complete once the land was returned to the

people, and all vestiges of colonial dispossession were addressed.[254]

At an October 1933 convention, held in Chicago, the members of the United Irish Societies and IRA clubs issued a formal protest against what they regarded as the unjust policy of the Fianna Fáil government in its treatment of Irish Republican Army volunteers, and members of the Boycott British League. These men, they argued, were being held in confinement and treated as ordinary criminals, when in fact they ought to have been recognised as political prisoners. Furthermore, the delegates voiced approval of the work of the Boycott British League, praising its campaign against British imports. They expressed the hope that the League would achieve success in its efforts to resist economic domination and to strengthen the Republican cause through the boycott.[255]

In November 1933, '*United Ireland*' remarked in an article that, since 1927, there had always been two strings to the I.R.A.'s bow, and in moments of crisis they twanged furiously on the patriotic one. The tune they played was "Boycott British Goods", an air composed to catch the ear of the general public. Yet, it claimed, the effort was in vain. The masses allegedly remained aloof, showing little enthusiasm, while the A.C.A. continued to supposedly grow in strength and discipline. By July, it had been launched as a nationwide organisation of militant youth, pledged to resist and to destroy Communism. The campaign was depicted as being part of a Communist conspiracy, orchestrated by the IRA. The paper claimed that when faced with the issue of the how the economy should be best structured, the Army Council shifted uneasily, wavering first towards private property, then towards Communism, and finally coming down on the Communist side. This statement proved characteristic of the I.R.A. leadership's tendency to face both ways whenever confronted with difficulties. Significantly, the declaration

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[254] *Cork Examiner 10/10/1933*

[255] *An Phoblacht 4/11/1933*

avoided any reference to industry. Instead, the matter was framed solely in terms of land.

According to the '*United Ireland*,' the opening clauses had suggested a recognition, not of private ownership, but of private occupation of land, yet hedged about with so many conditions that the reality amounted to occupation only at the discretion of the State. Having made this ambiguous concession to bourgeois prejudice in favour of private ownership, the Army Council then took it away again by declaring that it would be the policy of the State to promote as rapidly as possible the co-operative organisation of agriculture. These co-operatives, it was said, would be co-ordinated with distributing and marketing bodies, and would hold responsibility for regulating production, overseeing internal distribution of food supplies, and handling the marketing of the national surplus.

In effect, this represented a guarded restatement of the supposedly Communist land policy practised in Russia up to 1928, the only difference being that what Peadar O'Donnell had once called "collectives" were now renamed "co-operatives." Finally, the Army Council offered reassurance to the farming class, by promising that legislative compulsion would not be used to force them into these co-operatives, insisting that those who wished to stand aloof would be permitted to do so.[256]

'*An Phoblacht*' ran an article in a January 1934 edition that was heavily critical of the '*Irish Press*' newspaper. The '*Irish Press*,' it claimed, kept up the pretence that the Fianna Fáil government was waging an Economic War with England. Yet it was well aware that no drastic measures had been taken against Imperialist financial or economic interests, measures which might have given relief to the people at the expense of the Imperialists who were making them bear the brunt of the struggle. The article claimed that the paper had attacked the Boycott British Campaign, and no protest appeared in its editorial columns against the granting of tariff preferences to

[256] *United Ireland 11/11/1933*

British goods, over those of other countries. Its attitude towards the "Imperialist-Fascist alliance," it suggested was typical of its whole policy. It urged that the Blueshirts should not be permitted to drill or parade in uniform, but it failed to examine the foundations of the movement. It did not make clear that the "Imperialist-Fascist" bloc was made up of all those hostile to Irish sovereignty and unity; that its ranks included every social reactionary intent on keeping the masses in economic bondage; and that its directors and backers were bankers, landlords, ranchers, cattle-exporters, importers and distributors of British goods, wealthy shopkeepers, and those with large investments in England.

According to '*An Phoblach*t,' this failure was explained by the fact that, on such matters, the difference between the Imperialists and Fianna Fáil, between the '*Irish Independent*' and the '*Irish Press*,' was not the deep gulf many imagined. It was only the difference between two rival factions fighting for economic domination: one seeking it on behalf of British capitalists, the other on behalf of Irish or Anglo-Irish capitalists. Both factions were hostile to any movement that sought even modest reform of the economic system, and both were deadly opposed to the Republican Movement, whose policy called for a revolutionary change in the whole social and economic structure. The article claimed that that reality helped to explain why the '*Irish Press*' supposedly devoted so much space and gave such heavy headlines to Imperialist activities, while Republican news was virtually boycotted. In the event of a Fianna Fáil defeat, those behind the '*Irish Press*' would have preferred an Imperialist regime to a Republican one, since they allegedly saw in Republicans a mortal threat to their privileged economic position.[257]

In late January 1934, '*An Phoblacht*' fiercely criticised Mr R. Anthony, described as a "renegade Labour official," for what the paper called his attempt at the Cork Harbour Board to serve the interests of the British imperialists who controlled the coal mines of Great Britain. The paper asserted that Anthony's reputation as a labour leader had collapsed during

[257] *An Phoblacht 13/1/1934*

the introduction of the Coercion Act in 1931, when, it claimed, he openly aligned himself with the "anti-democratic and reactionary" Free State ministry. Since then, '*An Phoblacht*' maintained, he had repeatedly appeared in public life for his bitter attacks on republicanism. According to the paper, Anthony's latest move - which it framed as an effort to tighten Britain's economic hold on Ireland and keep Irish workers in a "perpetual state of dependence" - should not go unnoticed by the Irish trade union to which he still belonged. The paper warned that if figures like Anthony, whom it accused of willingly sacrificing Irish workers to the interests of "British big business," were permitted to remain within the ranks of organised Irish labour, then betrayal of the workers would only continue, as it had so many times before. Finally, '*An Phoblacht*' congratulated the Cork Board for resisting what it described as Anthony's attempt to replace German coal with a British substitute.[258]

During February 1934, Mr. J. A. Cullen, an organising secretary of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (IT&GWU) communicated to '*An Phoblacht*' that the Ballinrobe branch of the English-based A.T. & G.W. Union transferred in a body to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. It was maintained that, from then on, Irish workers should have regarded membership of Irish trade unions as a matter of principle. A former officer of the English union, who had been removed from his position by the branch, attempted to establish a new section of that body in the district. His efforts involved recruiting from among the "imperialist" Blueshirts, men who had reportedly never been genuine trade unionists nor representatives of the real working class. The Ballinrobe branch made clear its stance: it stood firmly behind the "Boycott British" campaign-rejecting not only British goods, but also British unions and all other British institutions.[259]

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[258] *An Phoblacht 20/1/1934*

[259] *An Phoblacht 25/2/1934*

In May 1934, the '*United Ireland*' reported that the League of Youth carried forth its motto, "Onward," during a recent tour of the Glenamaddy district. The day proceeded peacefully, giving offence to no one and taking none in return, until an unexpected outburst occurred. One detractor suddenly launched into a tirade, unleashing abuse that included insulting references to the Bishop of Galway, gratuitous remarks about Tom Barry and the I.R.A., and a string of coarse epithets directed at the League members themselves. The irony of the incident, it claimed, was not lost. Living in or near the Gaeltacht, the boys who issued the abuse had called for a boycott of British goods. Yet, as the League observers noted, their choice of language seemed itself, it believed, an unfortunate import. If their motto of "Boycott British Goods" were extended to language, it might, they suggested, be of benefit to both the individuals and their country. Aside from this episode, the tour passed without further incident-an otherwise uneventful day.[260]

The '*United Ireland*' paper documented an address given by Eoin O'Duffy, the National Army General and leader of the League of Youth ('Blueshirts'). He attacked sentiments shared by some in the Fianna Fáil Government about the idea of boycotting trade with Great Britain. It was evident, he claimed, that there had been no alternative market. In 1934, millions of pounds had been spent on purchasing goods from other countries in an attempt to persuade them to trade with Ireland. These countries were willing to sell to Ireland, but they refused to buy Irish goods in return. O'Duffy challenged President of the Executive Council, Eamon de Valera, to name a single country that had purchased, or would purchase, Irish products to even one-tenth of the value Ireland had bought from them. The British had not sought a rupture; they had been, and still were, eager to buy Irish cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, butter, and eggs. However, with walls in Ireland covered in slogans urging the boycott of

[260] *United Ireland 26/5/1934*

British goods, he opined that the British had simply taken the Irish at their word.[261]

In November 1934, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that a glass case situated in the Dublin city's Royal College of Surgeons was shattered by medical students as they had contained recruiting posters for the British Army Medical Corps and the Imperialist Indian Medical Corps. Such posters were torn up and replaced by a notice declaring "On to the Republic. Boycott British Recruiting Agencies."[262]

[261] *United Ireland 23/6/1934*

[262] *An Phoblacht 17/11/1934*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS

In 1934, the Army Council of the IRA reversed a majority resolution of the IRA membership to establish a "Republican Congress" aimed at unifying the broader republican and labour movements. O'Donnell, Ryan, and Gilmore seceded from the IRA leadership and proceeded to form the Republican Congress nonetheless.[263]

In April 1934, the front page of '*An Phoblacht*' ran a declaration from the IRA's Army Council expressing its anger at the decision of leading IRA figures to launch a separate organisation to address the economic agenda of the hardline Republican movement. Due to the criticism that some members had faced from the Republican Congress, the Council had considered it necessary to clarify its attitude. It insisted that, in-so-far as the disputed statement was an attack on the present social and economic system, and an indictment of the policies of the governments of both the Six and the Twenty-Six Counties, the Army Council was in complete agreement with it. In this respect, the Council asserted, the statement merely repeated what had already been declared many times in its public pronouncements and in the pages of '*An Phoblacht*' - the primary propaganda organ of the IRA. The Council pointed out that the Athlone conference had been primarily organised by Peadar O'Donnell and Michael Price, whose names had often been linked prominently as officers of the Irish Republican Army. The Council stated that it was therefore necessary to clarify their recent decisions. At a General Army Convention held the previous month, both O'Donnell and Price, accompanied by George Gilmore, had walked out after some of their proposals were rejected by the delegates. All three had been suspended from membership of the IRA and were awaiting court-martial. According to the Army Council, they had not informed the leadership of their intention to convene a congress, and had no authority to do so beforehand.

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[263] *'Lesser Spotted Comrades - Peadar O'Donnell' (2021). rupture.ie*

The Council accused O'Donnell, Price, and Gilmore of attempting to disrupt the Army by theatrically leaving the Convention, trying to persuade other Volunteers to follow them, and issuing a statement attacking the IRA's policy. The Council also rejected a claim made by the Communist Party of Ireland in a manifesto issued that same day, which had described the Athlone meeting as "the revolt of a large section of the Irish Republican Army." The Council dismissed this claim, arguing that the limited number of signatories demonstrated the weakness of the so-called internal revolt. The Army Council declared that this attempt to disrupt the IRA's cohesion would fail, as others had failed before. It nevertheless expressed regret that "some good Republicans" had allowed their names to be associated with an attack on the Army at a time when, according to the Council, a concerted assault was already being made against it by a combination of imperialists and "pseudo-republicans." Such divisions, it maintained, only aided the campaign of the capitalist and imperialist forces - enemies of the IRA.

The Army Council's statement also criticised Fianna Fáil. It claimed that the government had retreated from the true spirit of the revolutionary Republic, failed to resist British economic aggression, built up Irish capitalism, surrendered to landlordism, and generally failed to strike at either the British connection or the foundations of imperialism in the Twenty-Six Counties. It asserted that when conscription had been imposed during the war, Fianna Fáil had not properly rallied the people to the Republican cause. Instead, the IRA leadership of the time had misunderstood the struggle, fighting not to free Ireland but to serve other purposes. As a result, the Republican issue had been pushed into the background.

The Army Council claimed that the central issue was not the Athlone statement itself, but rather the formation of a new political party independent of the IRA, under the leadership of O'Donnell, Price, and others. This new party, it predicted, would in time contest elections and enter the Free State parliament. The Council warned that such a party would inevitably follow the same path as other constitutional

movements: beginning with good intentions, but ending in compromise and failure. It recalled that Fianna Fáil leaders had once promised to enter the Free State parliament only to smash it, yet now, in the Council's view, they had come to uphold both the parliament and the Free State system it represented.[264]

An early issue of the '*Republican Congress*' newspaper from early May 1934 highlights much of the aims of the organisation in its early days. The campaign in County Dublin for the Republican Congress was inaugurated at a public meeting in Rathfarnham on Monday, April 25 of that year. Despite heavy rain, there was a large attendance. Liam Reilly presided. Members of the Organising Bureau present included Messrs. O'Donnell, Price, Gilmore, and Ryan, along with Eithne Coyle, Nora Connolly O'Brien, and Sheila Humphries. Proinsias O'Riain, referring to his personal withdrawal from the I.R.A., stated that he felt the organisation was no longer fulfilling the task for which he had joined it. Over the previous two years, he believed the I.R.A. leadership had brought the revolutionary movement to a standstill. The Republican Congress, he declared, would reopen the road for progress. Those who left the I.R.A. were not seeking to cause a "split," except one between the exploited and the exploiters. Mrs. Nora Connolly O'Brien stated that the Republican Congress would provide a foundation for unity between Southern separatists and the non-culturally 'nationalist' population of the North-East. At the Congress, she said, people would recognise that the struggle for national freedom must go hand in hand with the struggle against exploitation. The unity of the exploited of all creeds on both sides of the border, she argued, was the only true and worthwhile unity. Michael Price asserted that the Congress would make Connolly's philosophy the foundation for achieving the Republic. Alongside the national struggle, every form of social injustice and exploitation must be challenged. The Irish Republic, he argued, depended entirely on the support of the exploited industrial workers and small farmers. By bringing representatives of these groups to the

[264] *An Phoblacht 14/4/1934*

Congress, they would bring the Republic itself closer to realisation. He outlined the organisational policy, explaining that County Committees would form the foundation for the future Republican Assembly of Ireland. George Gilmore compared the “Blueshirt Party” and the Unionist Party in the North-East, noting that, in his view, both represented imperialist capitalism. However, he suggested that many of their rank and file had interests aligned with those of the Congress. He said the same of Fianna Fáil: while its leadership had a class-conscious character, its base was made up of people who also belonged in the Congress movement. Peadar O'Donnell stated that, for the first time in the history of Republican congresses, the forthcoming Congress would include Republican representation from the men and women of non-nationalist stock in the Six Counties. The organisers, he said, were attempting to build a force capable of ending the scandal of isolated strike pickets-a force that would stand in defence of the exploited. He recalled that when he had authored the 1926 resolution severing the I.R.A. from the Second Dáil, his vision was for the I.R.A. to associate with working-class movements and become their defender. That day, he appealed to the men of the I.R.A. not to divide their ranks. The only real difference between them and the Congress workers, he said, was a lack of understanding about what the latter were fighting for.

Through its own print organ, the Republican Congress asserted that, in its view, a united Irish Republic could only have been achieved through a revolutionary struggle that uprooted capitalism. It upheld Connolly’s teaching that a truly free Ireland could not exist alongside a subject working class, nor could a subject Ireland produce a free working class-an insight it regarded as expressing the deepest instinct of Ireland’s oppressed nation. The failure of Northern workers to recognise the inseparability of their class freedom from the national struggle had historically weakened the fight for Irish liberation. However, it noted that deep wedges of Northern workers had begun to free themselves from the illusions that had long held them in bondage to imperial exploitation, opening the opportunity to bring the national question sharply back to the forefront.

In the Twenty-Six Counties, it argued, people had to see clearly that the imperial connection was upheld by the same forces that defended Irish capitalism-and that these same forces would ultimately be mobilised to protect that connection, even through the cost of British lives, should a real push for freedom emerge. Leaderships tethered to Irish capitalism, it claimed, paid only lip-service to the Republic, confusing sincere Republicans and withholding them from the genuine struggle for freedom. Such organisations had consistently narrowed the national demand-most starkly in 1921, when the Republic was reduced to the stature of "Document No. 2".

The state that emerged from such compromise had revealed its loyalty to British imperial authority during the annuities dispute. When Britain challenged Irish sovereignty, the government had not responded by invoking the Republic or rallying the people, but by citing British Acts of Parliament and resorting to legal procedure. This retreat had not been opposed by the organisations that might have raised the standard of the Republic. If the IRA leadership had understood that the so-called economic war served Irish capitalist-not national-interests, they might have mobilised the people behind the Republic before offering any support. Their failure allowed the Republican issue to be further marginalised. The paper argued that this mistake needed to be corrected. It called for a Congress of Republican opinion to be assembled to reassert the Republic as the dominant political issue and to define the necessary actions to support it. Into this Congress, it expected, would come anti-imperialists from North-East Ulster, representing workers who had previously remained aloof from-or had even been hostile to-the national struggle. Their participation marked a turning point in forging unity among the exploited across Ireland.

The main bases for Republican mobilisation in the South, it claimed, were:

- **Industrial Workers** – who were being dragged into degrading working conditions as a new factory system developed, even as European and American experience had already revealed the dangers of such systems. The Congress warned that unless these workers were organised, Ireland would repeat the same horrors.
- **Gaeltacht Youth** – who were, it said, being confined to lives of isolation, hard manual labour, and forced migration. The Congress believed that ever-widening sections of the Gaeltacht community were recognising the futility of this condition. These young people needed support in breaking through their physical and economic confinement, to gain free access to broader lands and opportunities, and their liberation had to be closely linked to the working-class struggle.
- **Small Farmers and Petty Traders** – already present in significant numbers in Republican organisations, this group, it maintained, could only gain freedom as active allies of the working class. The Congress insisted that the Land Commission would never be abolished, nor the ranch system dismantled, until a revolutionary government of workers and small farmers held power. Only under such a government could agricultural labourers be lifted from sub-human conditions. Only then could the present Civil Service be dismantled and rebuilt from the lower ranks upwards, with wages related to what general conditions in field and factory could reasonably provide.

In conclusion, the Republican Congress pledged itself to the task of uniting and mobilising these sections of Irish life. It declared that, once established, the Republic would be one of workers and small farmers-and that only these combined forces could bring it into being. The list of signatures to this manifesto included:

- (Mrs.) Nora Connolly O'Brien, Belfast
- Michael Price, Dublin City
- Seán McGuinness, Co. Offaly
- Patrick Lynch, Co. Offaly
- Tom Maguire, Collinstown, Co. Westmeath
- Frank Ryan, Dublin City

- Sheila Humphries, Dublin City
- Máire Lanerty, Belfast
- Brian Corrigan, Mulranny, Co. Mayo
- Eithne Coyle, Tír Chonaill (Co. Donegal)
- Patrick Norton, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
- Seamus McCann, Derry
- Joseph Doyle, Dublin City
- Robert Emmet, Dublin City
- Patrick Gralton, Co. Leitrim
- John Joe Hoey, Co. Leitrim
- Michael Feely, Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon
- George Gilmore, Dublin City
- Seán Mulgrew, Mulranny, Co. Mayo
- Peadar O'Donnell, Tír Chonaill (Co. Donegal)
- Liam Kelly, Dublin City
- James Cahill, Co. Galway
- Peter Doolan, Co. Offaly.

In the same issue, it was outlined that, from the perspective of the '*Republican Congress*,' the I.R.A., once the vanguard of revolutionary republicanism in Ireland, had recently retreated from its purpose. This was the context in which Michael Price, George Gilmore, Peadar O'Donnell, and Frank Ryan withdrew from the organisation. They asserted, as the Republican Congress, that this decision was not a matter of personal grievance, but a political necessity born of principle. At the 1933 General Convention, opposition emerged to what they, in the Congress, recognised as a dangerous and deliberate inertia. The I.R.A. leadership, despite possessing a revolutionary programme, took no steps to implement it. Instead, the leadership postponed action indefinitely, effectively shelving the revolutionary aims in the hope of a "more favourable time." As the Republican Congress saw it, this was not mere caution-it was retreat. The Republican Congress sharply criticised the leadership's decision at the 1933 Convention to impose restrictions on members, forbidding them from expressing views on political, social, or economic questions. This, they argued, silenced rank-and-file Volunteers and prevented internal democracy, while recently allowing space in '*An Phoblacht*' for supposedly reactionary and non-republican voices.

According to the Congress's interpretation, this amounted to a conscious effort to suppress revolutionary thinking within the I.R.A.

The 1934 Convention, in the eyes of the Republican Congress, confirmed the deepening crisis. A key moment came when Michael Price introduced a resolution reaffirming the Army's commitment to a Republic rooted in social justice-a Republic guided by Connolly's vision and founded on the abolition of exploitation. Despite strong support among delegates, the motion was defeated due to the votes of the leadership. When Peadar O'Donnell and George Gilmore subsequently proposed the formation of a Republican Congress-a platform to rally all progressive republican and anti-imperialist forces-that motion too was rejected. The Congress maintained that this rejection signalled a decisive break between the leadership, and any meaningful revolutionary purpose. Remaining within the core of the I.R.A., the dissidents argued, would have meant accepting enforced silence, abandoning the cause of the working class, and legitimising the direction the leadership had taken. From the new Republican Congress's standpoint, such complicity was unacceptable.

The Republican Congress did not regard the withdrawal of Price, Gilmore, O'Donnell, and Ryan as defeat. Rather, they considered it a political necessity. They refused to participate in the disciplinary tribunals summoned against them, pointing out that the panels were composed entirely of those who had opposed their resolutions. The trials, they believed, were not impartial inquiries, but political reprisals. Frank Ryan, too, had declined re-election to the Army Executive at the 1933 Convention, after concluding that minority dissent no longer had the ability to influence the leadership. He joined Gilmore, Price, and O'Donnell in formally leaving the I.R.A. in 1934, recognising, like the others, the recent shift toward reaction inside the organisation. Out of this situation emerged the 'Athlone Conference' and, from there, the formal call for a Republican Congress.

From the perspective of the Republican Congress, the Athlone Conference represented a moment of renewal - an opportunity to re-orient Irish republicanism toward the revolutionary goals it had (allegedly) long since abandoned. The Republican Congress reaffirmed Connolly's central idea: that there could be no free Ireland without a free working class, and no free working class in a partitioned, capitalist Ireland. The Congress set itself the task of uniting the exploited of all creeds and traditions-North and South-in a common anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist struggle. They envisioned a Congress that would not only revive the national demand but place it squarely within the fight for social and economic justice. As organisers saw it, this new formation would bring the issue of the Republic back to the forefront-not as an abstraction, but as a living demand rooted in the lives of workers, small farmers, and the oppressed. While the I.R.A. continued along its chosen path, the Republican Congress resolved to chart a different course: one they believed was the only road to a true Irish Republic.[265]

It appears that Tom Maguire, a supporter of the Congress (see below), had in fact been serving as Chairman of Westmeath County Council in 1934, as indicated in a '*Westmeath Examiner*' report.[266]

In late May 1934, the '*Republican Congress*' paper claimed that a united front of industrial and agricultural workers, along with small farmers, was rapidly taking shape during the Local Government Elections campaign. The campaign's guiding slogan - "Man the County Councils in the Interests of the Exploited" - was actively being put into effect. The previous week, a well-attended meeting was held by the Mullingar Trades Council, featuring speakers from the Republican Congress, including Nora Connolly-O'Brien, Tom Maguire, and Michael Price. The meeting took place across several towns - Mullingar, Castlepollard, Collinstown, and Coole-where significant support was reported. At the

[265] *Republican Congress 5/5/1934*

[266] *Westmeath Examiner 28/4/1934*

close of Michael Price's address, Comiskey, Secretary of the Mullingar Trades Council and a candidate in the election, declared:

> *"The small farmers and workers will become in a very short time one united force. I am glad to associate myself with the small farmers who, like ourselves, are taking hard knocks at the present time."*

Comiskey stood as the official candidate of the organised workers in Mullingar - the "town among the ranches." A popular and resilient figure, he dismissed opposition from the local elite, criticising the "big people" of the town who resisted his candidacy. Despite the supposed "gombeen" element, his chances of election appeared strong thanks to the backing of small farmers and rural labourers. Comiskey denounced the inaction of previous councillors, highlighting that only 20 houses had been built in the town in the past five years-this despite rising population, blocked emigration routes, and deepening unemployment. His programme of essential workers' demands received enthusiastic support. He concluded with a pledge of unity:

> *"I am willing to associate myself with Tom Maguire, and I hope you will agree he should stand on our platform in the interests of workers and Republicans united. When the time for the Republican Congress comes, I hope we will send our delegates alongside the rest of the workers of Ireland."*

An additional representative meeting of supporters was held for Tom Maguire's campaign in the Westmeath County Council election. The meeting took place in Castlepollard Town Hall and drew groups of workers from Fore, Balrath, Castlepollard, and surrounding areas. Tom Maguire outlined his campaign with a call to unite all those who had stood consistently for the Republican cause:

> *"I seek the support of the section of the people who have always supported the Republican struggle."*

His programme included:

- **Employment for All:** A guarantee that all who are willing to work, in town or country, must have the right to employment.
- **National Credit for Industry:** Demanding that national credit be used to create new industries, with those industries to be controlled by the workers in the interests of the community.
- **Relief for Small Farmers and Rural Labourers**: Through heavier taxation on the wealthy, ranchers, and high incomes (over £500), Maguire proposed reducing the burden on the rural poor.
- **Minimum Wage for Agricultural Workers:** He condemned the miserable wages of 1/-, 1/6, or 2/- per day as the result of big farmers supposedly seeking to rally support for "fascist" politics.
- **Support for Urban Workers:** Full backing for town workers in their fight against wage cuts, poor conditions, and for decent housing at fair rents.

He concluded with a visionary call for a Republican Congress:

> *"I stand for a great assembly - a Republican Congress - composed of delegates from trade union branches, Fianna Fáil clubs, IRA units, small farmers' groups, and town tenants. Such a body would wield the true power of the people, to strip the fascists of all support."*[267]

According to a report by the '*Republican Congress*' in June 1934, Chairman L. Louison of the I.L.G.W.U. welcomed Mrs. Nora Connolly O'Brien and Mr. Michael Price in warm and respectful terms. The report claimed that the delegates to the Council, alongside a strong contingent of local members, had made a deep impression with their seriousness, attentiveness, and enthusiasm, especially when a speaker

[267] *Republican Congress 26/5/1934*

drove home a telling point. Fine, sturdy representatives of the Irish working class were evident throughout the hall; there was no trace of defeatism. Rather, it was clear that Irish workers were rising once more on a fresh wave of struggle and hope. Youthful energy predominated, yet the experienced voices and practical insight evident in side conversations and strategic discussions showed the movement was grounded in hard-earned political understanding-gained both at home and abroad.

Nora Connolly O'Brien reportedly addressed the Congress with the confidence of someone speaking from long experience. She expressed the view that the period of political disillusionment had passed, and that the time had come to reassert the independent political power of organised labour. Where once the absence from labour ranks was an anomaly, it had now become more common-but this was a challenge rather than a failure. The worsening material conditions of workers and small farmers had forced many to depend on others to lead, rather than drawing strength from collective action. She emphasised the importance of returning to the political and social principles of her father, James Connolly, as the only reliable foundation for real liberation in Ireland. Political independence, in her view, would remain hollow unless accompanied by economic and social transformation. The origins of the Athlone Conference were, in this light, a turning point-a chance to rally the people of Ireland to pursue a path based on Connolly's republican-socialist vision.

Michael Price followed with a forceful contribution focused on the unity of class interests across the island. He argued that any serious prospect of Irish freedom depended on linking the struggles of the South's working class with those in the North. These shared experiences of exploitation made it imperative to confront not only national division, but the economic structures that maintained it. He cautioned against the growing talk of border conflict, noting that such tensions were likely to be exploited by capitalist interests seeking to extend the power of the 26-county regime over the North-East. Any such development would distract from the real

objective: uniting the working people of all Ireland against their common exploiters. Despite limited resources, Price was optimistic. A movement was gathering strength with a fighting spirit not seen since Connolly's time. He insisted that the unemployed, though often disorganised, were far from powerless. Indeed, the system had no use for them beyond serving as a threat to employed workers. Every Trade Council, he said, should include representatives of the unemployed, given the disproportionate burden they bore under capitalism. He also turned his attention to rural Ireland, pointing to the small farmers and agricultural labourers who had formed the backbone of the national struggle in the past. Although there were challenges in politically uniting rural and urban communities due to differences in mindset and organisation, he stressed that this made the need for strong, clear working-class leadership all the more urgent.

Attention was given to developments along the Western seaboard, including the Gaeltacht, where Congress had begun taking new initiatives. Price noted that, while geographically distant, the participation of workers from these areas was consistent with a vision James Connolly had held but never lived to see realised. The inclusion of workers from non-nationalist traditions in the North-East was also recognised as a major step forward-symbolising the growing unity of the Irish working class across religious and regional divides. The Congress, it was emphasised, was not gathering to pass resolutions or seek symbolic power. He quipped that there were no illusions about taking over the existing parliamentary machine, which had been designed to serve the needs of the capitalist class and functioned as an instrument of oppression. Instead, Price advocated for a complete transformation-where county-based committees of workers, allied with small farmers and the unemployed, would assume actual governing functions. These local committees would form the basis of a new people's state, in contrast to the current County Councils, which remained mere extensions of central government authority.

In closing, Price spoke in support of Tom Maguire, the "anti-Imperialist and anti-Blueshirt" candidate for North-West

Meath. He noted that Maguire's campaign offered more than opposition - it presented a constructive programme built on workers' demands. Given the considerable overlap between Maguire's platform and that of the Council candidates, Price proposed a reciprocal arrangement: that Maguire should be invited to speak from the Council's platform, and that the Council's candidates be welcomed to share Maguire's platform in turn. This would be a clear and practical demonstration of unity between revolutionary workers, small farmers, and republican socialists.[268]

At the close of June, the '*Republican Congress*' paper reported that a public meeting in support of Patrick Mahon, Workers' Republican candidate for Offaly County Council, was held in Clara at the last Saturday of the month. The meeting was addressed by the candidate himself, along with his comrades F. Ryan and S. McGuinness. On Sunday, additional chapel gate meetings were held at Mountbolus and Killeagh, drawing local attention to the campaign. Meanwhile, in the Coole Electoral Area of North Westmeath, final rallies were held in support of Tom Maguire, also standing as a Workers' Republican candidate. These gatherings marked the closing phase of what was depicted as a vigorous grassroots campaign aiming to place "working-class" representatives at the forefront of local government.[269]

At the turn of July, the '*Republican Congress*' paper extended congratulations to Tom Maguire (Westmeath) and John O'Byrne (Dundalk) for their successful campaigns in the local elections, during which they carried forward the banner of the Workers' Republic. Although unsuccessful in their bids, Barney Kelly (South Westmeath) and P. Moran (Offaly) also made commendable efforts. Their chances were allegedly hindered by a lack of transport and the resulting organisational difficulties, which affected the reach and coordination of their campaigns.[270]

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[268] *Republican Congress 2/6/1934*

[269] *Republican Congress 30/6/1934*

[270] *Republican Congress 7/7/1934*

It was reported in September 1934 that the basis of delegate representation for the Republican Congress was based on the following: signatories to the call for the Congress; members of the Organising Bureau; Republican Congress groups, which were entitled to two delegates from each group of fifty members or fraction of fifty, with two further delegates for every succeeding fifty members or fraction of fifty in a group; Tenant Leagues, which could send one delegate from each group of thirty members or fraction of thirty; jobs, factories, and workshops, which could send one delegate from each group of thirty workers; and organisations, including political parties, trades councils, trades unions, Cumann na mBan, the I.R.A., and the I.C.A., which could send two delegates from each executive or council and one delegate from each branch.[271]

An article from '*United Ireland*,' ran in early October 1934, reported on a split within what it termed the "Communist Congress," described as a Republican event held in Rathmines Town Hall. It noted that the organisers failed to achieve their aims when their main resolution was defeated, leading several figures - including Michael Price, Nora Connolly O'Brien, Roddy Connolly, B. Conway, Tom Maguire and others - to refuse positions on the Executive. The paper cautioned readers not to think this by any means marked the end of Communist activity in Ireland. In a second section titled "Differences About Tactics," the article argued that divisions between the "Communist" Republican groups and the IRA were merely tactical, not ideological. All, it claimed, shared the goal of spreading Communist doctrines, but differed in how openly they did so. The piece concluded that the "mildly-spoken" groups (in reference to the Republican Congress and the paramilitary body of the IRA) were more dangerous than overt Communists because their influence was supposedly subtler and more insidious. '*United Ireland*' portrayed Soviet Communists and the IRA as tactically divided but united in their subversive aims. It warned readers to remain vigilant, suggesting even moderate

[271] *Republican Congress 8/9/1934*

left-wing elements were a covert threat, reflecting the paper's staunchly anti-Communist and anti-Republican stance aligned with Fine Gael and the Blueshirts.[272]

On the same date, an '*Irish Workers Voice*' article titled "Republican Congress Triumphs: Great United Rally Against Imperialism" reported in detail on the first major rally of the Republican Congress, held shortly after the movement's formation from a split within the IRA. The piece celebrated the event as a decisive victory for revolutionary socialism and working-class unity, framing it as the beginning of a new stage in Ireland's anti-imperialist struggle. Written in the style of official reportage but infused with polemical energy, it chronicled the speeches and debates of the Congress, highlighting what they perceived as the clash between revolutionary and constitutional republican tendencies. The '*Irish Workers Voice,*' being the paper of the old Communist Party of Ireland - strongly backed the Congress as what they saw as an expression of explicitly Marxist republicanism. The article therefore aimed not just to record proceedings but to vindicate the Congress as a victory for socialism over narrow cultural nationalism. The meeting was opened by Seán Lucas (Co. Dublin), who welcomed delegates in Irish and English. His greeting, "Cuis athais dom fáilte chur roimh na teachtairí…" had set a national and cultural tone, invoking republican tradition while emphasising working-class solidarity. After a warm welcome, George Gilmore (of the IRA Army Executive), speaking for the Organising Bureau, read a statement on the background to the Congress. He recounted how the split in the IRA and the Athlone Manifesto had led to this new stage: a call for a united front of labour and republican forces, demanding a "great united front movement" to lay the groundwork for future struggle. Tremendous applause greeted the reading, showing strong enthusiasm for a break with the IRA orthodoxy. R. J. (Roddy) Connolly, son of James Connolly and leading promoter of Marxist ideals, moved the majority Republican resolution, calling for an unambiguous struggle for a Workers' Republic. He declared that the difference between

[272] *United Ireland 6/10/1934*

the two factions - majority and minority - lay in whether the Irish working-class would take the lead in the fight for the Republic or remain subordinate to middle-class nationalism. Connolly argued that the fight was not merely against imperialism but against capitalism itself, and that the workers' struggle must be integrated with the republican one. He accused the IRA's leadership of "dealing with the rising militancy of the working class" only to divert it toward nationalist or fascist ends, describing this as betrayal. True republicans, he insisted, should fight capitalism directly and aim for a Workers' and Farmers' Republic - a socialist state that would end exploitation and inequality. The slogan of the "Workers' Republic," he explained, covered all previous goals: national independence, workers' control of industry, and farmers' ownership of the land. He denounced the notion of the "Irish Republic" as too abstract - a phrase that could be manipulated by any class. Only the socialist republic, he declared, could make independence real. Nora Connolly O'Brien, another of James Connolly's children, seconded the motion. She reminded the Congress that her father had declared that a republic could only be achieved by "uprooting capitalism on the way." She criticised those who treated the term "Irish Republic" as a sentimental slogan rather than a class or social programme, and urged delegates to link national freedom with social revolution.

Peadar O'Donnell, oft regarded as one of the most charismatic figures of the Anti-Treaty IRA, then moved a rival minority resolution, also supporting workers and farmers, but framed differently. His motion called for unity of all anti-imperialist forces without making socialism the explicit precondition for unity. He warned that the Congress should not repeat the mistakes of 1921, when republicanism had split, and urged that working-class leadership be combined with broad co-operation. Nonetheless, he too had identified the struggle as one against capitalism and imperialism together. O'Donnell opined:

> *"Are you going to allow de Valera to get off with the claim that he is still a republican? Are you going to allow the IRA leaders to say that they are out for the*

Republic, while we are out for the Workers' Republic?"

O'Donnell remarked that his quarrel with de Valera was not that he was not a Socialist, but that he was not a Republican.

The debate that followed reflected real tension within the Congress between those who wanted a purely class-based revolutionary programme and those who sought a broader anti-imperialist front. Roddy Connolly's faction argued that the Workers' Republic must be the unifying slogan because only socialism could prevent the betrayal of 1916 and 1921, when capitalist and clerical interests had compromised the revolution. O'Donnell's supporters, though also radical, worried that insisting on socialism alone might alienate small farmers and cultural nationalists who were not yet "class-conscious." Connolly's camp charged that rejecting the Workers' Republic meant leaving leadership of the national struggle in the hands of the middle class, while O'Donnell countered that too rigid a class definition might weaken the united front. In the end, the majority resolution was passed, representing the triumph of Connolly's faction. The article celebrated this as the establishment of the "real workers' republican policy" - a synthesis of socialism and cultural nationalism that would guarantee ultimate victory over both imperialism and capitalism. It concluded that, while both sides opposed imperialism, the majority's victory ensured that the working class would now lead the independence struggle for the first time in Irish history. The minority motion, although respected, was said to have left the revolution "in the hands of the middle class," whereas the majority's Workers' Republic line "alone could lead to the Republic." The article by the '*Irish Workers Voice*' also expressed confidence that the Congress would rally workers and small farmers into a single movement capable of destroying imperialism and the capitalist class alike. Its closing note was defiant and optimistic: the Workers' Republic line, it insisted, would be the only path to genuine Irish freedom.[273]

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[273] *Irish Workers Voice 6/10/1934*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

The '*Republican Congress*' newspaper, reporting on the debate at Congress in mid-October 1934, highlighted that by adopting a specific Minority Resolution, delegates argued that they would initiate a movement placing the working class at the head of the national struggle, thus making the Workers' Republic a tangible goal. Tom Maguire, a signatory from the town of Athlone, County Westmeath, called for a clear and unambiguous declaration in favour of the Workers' Republic. Such a stance, he said, would protect the Congress from suspicion, and offer a solid principle on which it could stand or fall. T. Geehan, speaking on behalf of the Belfast branch of the Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement (I.U.W.M.), supported the Minority Resolution. He argued that simply talking about the Workers' Republic was not enough. If that had ever been sufficient, the capitalist class in Ireland would have been defeated long ago. According to Geehan, the Workers' Republic could only be realised through a strong, intelligent, and well-disciplined working-class party. The Belfast I.U.W.M. delegation had not come to Congress to form yet another political party, but in the hope that a genuine United Front would emerge-capable of leading the struggle on the broadest possible basis. Geehan recalled the events of October 11th, 1932, when thousands of Protestant and Catholic workers in Belfast stood shoulder to shoulder in the streets against Irish capitalism and British imperialism. That moment, he said, had driven a serious breach into the wall of imperial rule in Ireland. To win over the masses, revolutionaries must not be content with rhetoric about the Workers' Republic. Many who once shouted that slogan had since become supporters of imperialism. Instead, the revolutionary movement must be rooted daily in the struggles of workers-mobilising them, North and South, Protestant and Catholic alike, into a single, broad United Front.

Mr. F. Purcell of the Dublin Irish Citizen Army supported the Majority Resolution. He believed it aligned with the true principles of James Connolly. The Minority Resolution, in his view, represented a step backward from the courageous progress the Congress had already made. Purcell questioned

why the Workers' Republic had suddenly become treated as if it were heresy, and why Congress could not take a clear stand on Connolly's vision. Connolly had said, "Our forces have ever been at the disposal of forces fighting for national freedom. We will always co-operate with a forward movement. The moment that forward movement ceases, we reserve our right to stand aside and go forward ourselves." Purcell warned that anything less than full commitment to this principle would be disastrous. The Congress must, he said, "nail the Workers' Republic colours to the mast." Seamus O'Brien, also of the Dublin I.C.A., viewed the Majority Resolution as honest and direct, precisely because it openly committed to the Workers' Republic. He had expressed surprise that some quoting Connolly seemed to misunderstand him entirely. Connolly, O'Brien reminded delegates, had not entered the national struggle as someone to be manipulated. He had brought with him a separate organisation, a separate leadership, and the backing of armed workers. Connolly had made it clear in '*The Workers Republic*' before 1916 that he was willing to take part in any genuine national movement-but always reserved the right for the socialist movement to step out of alignment and raise its own banner of freedom, if needed, to bring the cause one step closer to real liberation.[274]

The '*Republican Congress*' report that, at a commemoration held in Dublin during December 1934, in honour of Liam Mellows and other executed Republican leaders, speakers associated with the Republican Congress, the labour movement, and unemployed organisations issued grave warnings regarding the political direction of the Irish Free State and the growing threat of fascism. The event took place in severe weather conditions, with heavy rainfall throughout the proceedings, yet it remained well attended and highly charged. Contingents of the Irish Republican Army, alongside organised groups of unemployed workers, marched to College Green, where representatives of the trade union movement, unemployed organisations, the Republican Congress, and the Irish Citizen Army assembled. The

[274] *Republican Congress 13/10/1934*

platform was chaired by Larry O'Connor, and addresses were delivered by R. J. Connolly of the Irish Citizen Army, Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan of the Republican Congress, Barney Conway of the Workers' Union of Ireland, Mrs Charlotte Despard, and James Brereton of the Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement.

Barney Conway, speaking on behalf of the Workers' Union of Ireland, issued a stark warning. He argued that, unless workers organised immediately in a united front, political murder would again become a feature of Dublin life, as it had been during the executions of 1922. He contended that imperialist and capitalist forces were actively seeking to impose a fascist dictatorship in Ireland and that only unity between republican and working-class forces could prevent such an outcome. The commemoration also placed strong emphasis on the political legacy of Liam Mellows. Roddy Connolly, addressing the crowd, argued that Mellows, while imprisoned in Mountjoy Gaol, had grasped a political truth that the dominant leadership of the Republican movement had failed to recognise: that the struggle for the Republic could only succeed if it aligned itself with the organised working class and small farmers. According to Connolly, the reluctance of Republican leaders between 1919 and 1922 to engage fully with the workers' movement had fatally weakened the Republic. Mellows' insistence on such an alliance, he argued, had rendered him dangerous to both imperial and capitalist interests, and for that reason he had been executed.

Speakers repeatedly returned to the theme of betrayal and political responsibility. It was argued that the separation of republicanism from working-class struggle had cleared the way for the defeat of the Republic and the executions of Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey, and Dick Barrett. The speakers maintained that these men had not yet been avenged, and that true retribution lay not in violence, but in the achievement of the Republic for which they had died. This, they insisted, required the mobilisation of the working class in support of republican aims. The audience was urged to foster a political culture in which solidarity in industrial

struggle was regarded as equivalent to loyalty in armed conflict. Strike-breaking, it was suggested, should be viewed with the same moral condemnation as desertion in battle. Several speakers contended that sufficient numbers of committed republicans were present to sustain a genuine struggle for the Republic, and that failure to engage in such a struggle would itself amount to betrayal.

One of the most poignant moments of the commemoration came with the address by Mrs Charlotte Despard, a veteran campaigner for social justice who had travelled from Belfast to attend the event, shortly after celebrating her eightieth birthday. She was greeted with prolonged applause upon taking the platform. Drawing on her experiences during the Civil War and its aftermath, she spoke quietly but powerfully of her encounters with the mothers and widows of executed prisoners. She recalled her work, alongside Madame MacBride and other members of the Women's Prisoners' Defence League, in supporting families affected by executions and imprisonment during 1922 and 1923. Comparisons between successive Free State governments formed a central part of the political critique advanced at the commemoration. Barney Conway argued that while the Cosgrave government had relied openly on executions and repression, thereby hastening its own downfall, the then Fianna Fáil government prided itself on the absence of formal executions while pursuing more subtle forms of repression. He accused it of intimidating strike pickets, arresting anti-imperialists, and of tolerating fascist organisations, while exploiting its members' Civil War credentials to maintain working-class support. He further argued that workers had been misled in 1922, and were again being misled in 1934, with tragic consequences. Conway also placed significant blame on the Labour Party, accusing it of evading responsibility during the Civil War by issuing verbal protests against executions while continuing political alliances with those he regarded as responsible for the killings. He concluded that the central lesson of the 1922–23 conflict, exemplified by Mellows, was that only the working class could provide effective leadership for the republican struggle.

The need for unity was a consistent refrain throughout the commemoration. Speakers warned against complacency, insisting that political executions were not merely a phenomenon of the past. They argued that preparations were underway for a fascist dictatorship, which would, if necessary, be imposed through renewed violence. In response, they endorsed the campaign of the Republican Congress and appealed directly to workers to join a united front combining republican and working-class forces in opposition to fascism. James Brereton of the Irish Unemployed Workers' Movement cautioned against underestimating the fascist threat. He argued that those responsible for the violence of 1922–23 were once again seeking power, this time through a fascist strategy aimed at dictatorship. He warned that ridicule of figures such as Eoin O'Duffy risked obscuring the seriousness of the danger, and he criticised the Fianna Fáil government for employing authoritarian methods against the unemployed while professing opposition to fascism.

Frank Ryan concluded the proceedings by drawing a direct parallel between the policies of the Cosgrave and de Valera governments. He argued that while the former had executed republicans outright, the latter imposed long terms of penal servitude, both in defence of capitalist interests. He warned that, if circumstances demanded it, the Fianna Fáil government would not hesitate to carry out further executions of republican militants. Ryan rejected the claim that Fianna Fáil could deliver a republic, insisting that its leadership stood in opposition to the political vision of Mellows. He argued that this leadership would have to be exposed and replaced by one rooted in the Irish working class, which alone, he maintained, could achieve the Republic.

In the same edition, it was noted that, at a weekly joint meeting of the four Dublin branches of the Republican Congress, a decision was taken to concentrate organisational efforts on a single urban district in order to mobilise tenants around the issue of housing. The strategy reflected the

Congress's growing emphasis on social and economic struggles as an integral part of republican politics. The district selected for immediate action was the area served by the organisation's No. 3 Branch. Following this decision, members commenced a systematic canvass of tenants, seeking to raise awareness of housing conditions and to rally local residents to collective action in defence of tenant interests. This initiative was prompted in part by the emergence of anti-tenant organisations established by two groups of Dublin slum landlords. The formation of these bodies was widely perceived by tenants as a direct threat to their security and rights, and it contributed to a heightened sense of urgency within the affected communities. According to reports from the Dublin District Council, the campaign produced encouraging early results. Tenant engagement increased, and the organisational presence of the Republican Congress in the area was strengthened. The progress of the campaign was to be monitored closely and reported on a weekly basis, reflecting the importance attached to housing agitation within the wider republican and working-class programme of the Congress.[275]

In February 1935, '*The Blueshirt*' political paper opined that it would become more fully realised that Ireland, which had so much in common with the rest of Europe, was facing a terrible danger as a result of the breakdown of the so-called democratic system. That danger was Communism. It quipped that Communism, when the former Cumann na nGaedheal mentioned it, meant just a sort of bogeyman to be used for frightening timorous Tories, or else it was a term used to denote everything that was not Cumann na nGaedheal; to Fianna Fáil, of course, Communism was just another one of these imperialist catch-cries, and the thing itself simply did not exist in Ireland. However, the paper declared that, to any honest intelligent person in Ireland at that time, Communism, and especially the Communism which the self-styled

[275] *Republican Congress 15/12/1934*

Republican Congress was fostering, was a real and growing menace.[276]

An '*Irish Press*' article from May 1935 provided a detailed account of a speech given by Mr. Peadar O'Donnell at a Connolly Commemoration meeting held by the Republican Congress at Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin, on a Saturday evening. Mr. O'Donnell, presiding over the event, addressed the audience with a written message intended for those currently organised behind tariff-walls and wished them to keep quiet while they themselves grew fat. He emphasised the need for workers to realise that the Fianna Fáil Government's attack on Republicans was a dangerous movement. He warned that the Government's drive against Republicans could easily have pushed them back into the horrors of civil war and all its consequences, which he described as an evil that fell heaviest on the working class. O'Donnell highlighted the opportunity for voting on a re-declaration of a republic and called for all Republicans and working organisations to unite. He suggested that such unity could have led to significant changes, using the example of "Cosgrave, MacDermot and other people" who were uprooted since the defeat of Redmond in 1918.[277]

In a feature article for the '*Republican Congress*' in June 1935, George Gilmore outlined how the IRA had put forward candidates to contest the predominantly Catholic (and somewhat nationalist) constituencies of Central Belfast, South Armagh, Derry City and South Down. They had been successful in South Armagh, and polled strongly in Londonderry City and Belfast Central as 'Republicans.' Gilmore noted that the IRA candidate in Derry had suppressed an issue of '*An Phoblacht*' because it contained an attack on Fianna Fáil, which would've cost him votes from some of the broader electoral base in Northern Ireland. However, Gilmore noted that the IRA candidate in South

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[276] *The Blueshirt 2/2/1935*

[277] *Irish Press 13/5/1935*

Down was heavily defeated when Eamon de Valera himself entered the race in opposition and took the seat.

Gilmore asserted that the I.R.A. had, through the courage with which it confronted the C.I.D. terror campaign and the Coercion Act of 1931, played a significant role in unseating the Cosgrave government. However, he argued that with the coming to power of the de Valera government the organisation failed to formulate any policy that would have enabled it to win from Fianna Fáil the leadership of the republican people of Ireland. According to Gilmore, the I.R.A. ceased to be regarded as a purely anti–Free State force and instead came to be viewed generally as a critical, but essentially supportive, ally of the de Valera government. Gilmore maintained that within the I.R.A. Army Executive this situation was analysed in order to justify the call for an uprising of republican opinion, expressed through a Republican Congress. He argued that such a Congress was intended to rally the disrupted republican masses on the high ground of the Republic and to restate the terms of the national struggle. In Gilmore's view, this would have laid the basis for active participation in working-class and small-farmer struggles, through which the allies of imperialism in Ireland could be isolated and exposed. He contended that Irish capitalism was prepared to come to terms with imperialism and would become the leading force in both the subjugation of the nation and the exploitation of the people. The appropriate response, he argued, was to confront capitalism and imperialism with a Congress representing the Ireland of the poor - a force that could readily have been mobilised had the organisation and tradition of the I.R.A. been brought to bear on the task.

Gilmore criticised the leadership of the Republican Army for halting before the Fianna Fáil position and for proving both unable and unwilling to raise the struggle to a higher political level. He noted that some within the leadership believed it might be possible to urge Fianna Fáil onwards towards the Republic, but argued that this belief rested on a fundamental misunderstanding. According to Gilmore, the social and economic interests upon which Fianna Fáil was based were

entrenched directly in opposition to the Republic. As a result, he maintained, the necessity of winning the leadership of the masses was imperfectly understood. This misunderstanding, he observed, allowed responsible members of the Army Council to make statements such as: "The masses of the people always let down the Republic," and "I dare say we could get a big following - but what would we do with it?"

Gilmore argued that workers and small farmers followed Fianna Fáil because they believed it was working towards the Republic. It was therefore essential, he maintained, to expose Fianna Fáil as the political expression of Irish capitalism organising itself behind tariff walls, rather than a force advancing republican aims. Gilmore asserted that the only effective way to do this was to rally the "incorruptible inheritors of the fight for Irish freedom" - the workers and small farmers - and to set them against the real basis of England's hold on Ireland: landlord–rancher and finance-capitalist interests, described by their own adherents as "England's faithful garrison in Ireland." In such a struggle for the reconquest of Ireland from the reality of British imperialism, Gilmore argued, it would soon have become evident to which side the smaller Irish capitalist groupings that formed the social basis of Fianna Fáil would gravitate. Gilmore pointed out that in 1921 these interests had temporarily turned the forces of the I.R.A. in its original form (pre-split) against workers and small farmers in defence of the ranchers, thereby creating the conditions that later compelled compromise with imperialism. He further noted that in 1934 de Valera publicly declared his willingness, if necessary in order to "preserve order," to form a joint force with the Blueshirt fascists.

According to Gilmore, the task of rescuing workers and small farmers from the leadership of Fianna Fáil and bringing them into active struggle was central to any organisation claiming to exercise revolutionary republican leadership. He observed that this task was urged upon the I.R.A. Army Council over a period of several years by some of its members, but without full success. As a limited concession to working-class and small-farmer opinion,

Gilmore noted, the organisation adopted and published a socialist programme "to be put into force when power was achieved." However, he criticised some of the leadership for refusing to bind itself firmly to that programme. More significantly, he argued, it refused to associate the I.R.A. with worker and small-farmer struggles and instead urged volunteers to remain passive in the face of the fascist threat.[278]

[278] *Republican Congress 22/6/1935*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

On Bodenstown Day Northern workers came to the grave of James Connolly in Dublin there to pledge their allegiance to his cause. They will come to Dublin again to the Republican Congress on September 29 and 30 to undertake the achievement of Connolly's unfinished task.

A Belfast-based branch of the Wolfe Tone Commemoration group at the annual Republican Commemoration day at Bodenstown. The banner reads 'Break the Connection with Capitalism.'
(Photo source: Republican Congress 8/9/1934)

JIM GRALTON and FRANK RYAN, leaders of the Irish Workers' Clubs, New York, which participated in the great May Day demonstration there

Jim Gralton and Frank Ryan (the latter being a member of the IRA's Army Executive) are both notable examples of hardline socialist tendencies in Irish Republicanism.
(Photo source: Irish Workers' Voice 4/5/1935)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

REPUBLICAN
CONGRESS

Vol. II. No. 48. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1935. Price: ONE PENNY (U.S.A.: 5c.)

THEY MURDERED FOUR IN MOUNTJOY!

And Our Guiding Slogan Was Writ In Blood

THE MIND OF MELLOWS

THE anniversary of the murder of Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe MacKelvey and Dick Barrett challenges the memory of Republicans more sharply than perhaps any incident in the 1922-23 period. Judged merely as an ordeal for the central figures it is surpassed by the executions of the proud youngsters who with only their enthusiasms and natural courage to support them walked out before the muzzles of the rifles. For Mellows, O'Connor, MacKelvey and Barrett death had no terrors. Revolutionary

By
Peadar O'Donnell

workers and fighters, they had built up their will to meet such a situation so that the actual job of dying bred no horror.

This is something that young revolutionaries should remember: that the familiarising of the mind with dangers, (though living sincerely in the dangerous ways of the revolutionary fighter, takes the panic out of danger.

That does not mean that the revolutionary is indifferent to danger, only that he stores up reserves of thought to be mobilised in all corners. Dimitrov is a case in point of a man consciously nourishing the whole set of his ideas for support. Actually Dimitrov gave himself a slogan and a standard: "To Blime own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man." The revolutionary must always build for great tests by sincere co-operation with his ideals through daily tasks.

□ □

THESE four murders, however, stir us deeply. And more than anything else we cry out against them on

"Mellows was the first front-rank leader since Connolly."
[Lino-cut by Margaret Roper.

account of the loss they inflicted on the Republican movement. And in this respect the death of Mellows was the greatest blow of all.

It would be a hard job to convey the greatness of this man to the Republican population. He has left us little in writing, but the rich content of what he left reveals the value of his mind. In my opinion none of our revolutionaries has revealed in so few words such sharpness and brilliance of thought — except, perhaps, Robert Emmet.

Surely Mellows must have written on social issues outside Mountjoy? Can no recollection be made of such memos, letters, etc.? What of his days in America? Was any manifesto issued by him in the Galway election?

Mellows was the first front-rank Republican leader since Connolly to state the Republican struggle in terms of working-class masses against capitalism. In a memo issued from Mountjoy he appealed for a full and frank policy of associating the Republican struggle with the needs of the toilers in city and country. This conviction had formed in him as a direct result of his experiences. He saw quite clearly that the post-Treaty fight called for recognition of the fact that only the Ireland of the poor could continue the fight for independence.

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MELLOWS' document was captured and released for publicity by the then Free State Governments. It was

THE LESSON OF 1921

gives inspired scare headlines. Mellows' notes were rank Communism! Fr. Devour James Hogan, of Cork University, throws an interesting light on this "Red scare." He says now that of course Mellows' teachings were not Communist! We can only conclude that the scare was a playful little stunt on the part of the Professor's pals to enflame backward minds so that a firing party might easily be got to shoot Mellows. It is not without significance that all the leading figures in this business of official murders have since become men of very loud-voiced piety; but this is more the field of the novelist than the journalist: contess it is a psychological phenomenon that attracts me a good deal.

Mellows, who was probably the most saintly figure in the revolutionary struggle, was ostensibly uncompromising in his attack on the political tracts then being circulated by the Irish bishops.

He recites in his memos from Mountjoy the high points in the whole sorry business of Irish bishops playing Shaveen to British Imperialism. In this respect we should mention the conflict between himself and Fr. McMahon on the morning of his execution. In one of his last letters Mellows tells that the priest refused him absolution. Actually the priest lodgered him up to the very last. I can think of no similar scene except the badgering McGuire got at Tyburn. In the end Fr. McMahon said: "But won't you say you are sorry for any wrong you ever did?" "Of course I'm sorry for all the wrong I've ever done," Mellows said. And Fr. McMahon reading into this the meaning he sought then gave Mellows the rites of the Church for such an occasion. Fr. McMahon is still alive. I am summarising from the angry scene between himself and myself in the sacristy after the murders.

□ □

MEMORY of those dark days in the jails raises in one's mind a deep anxiety as to whether what was endured then by those who found their graves beside the walls is not being flouted by Republican movements of to-day. Surely the one slogan written there in the life blood of great hearts is: "Unite for the Republic."

A great orchestration of minds and ideals made up the Republican movement of those days. Has that orchestration been irreparably shattered?

The Republican movement of the Ten days was broken because a section of the movement called a halt. The civil war followed.

But the forces that were the Republican side in the civil war are to-day in confusion because a further section has called a halt and, using the forces and the arms organised by the makers of the first halt, now make war on those who would still advance.

Unity of Republicans for full independence is the way out of internal confusion.

Congress League of America Records Progress

THE first dance held by the New York Branch of the Irish Republican Congress League of America was a huge success. Over six hundred people crowded the Roseamon-Tuxedo Ballroom on Sunday, November 17—a record attendance which was paralleled only by the record night's enjoyment. To single out individual members of the Committee to whose hard work the successful function was due would be difficult, but particular mention must be made of Mrs. A. Kelly, Ann Dermody, Mrs. P. Moran, Gerald O'Reilly, Charley McGinnitty, Paddy Ryan Lackey, Hugh McKernan and Jim Ryan. To their unflagging organisational work the fine attendance of New York Irish is mainly due.

A souvenir issue of REPUBLICAN CONGRESS specially produced for the function and a special edition of the New York "Congress Bulletin" were bought up by the guests.

During the night the raffle—proceeds of which go to REPUBLICAN CONGRESS—was carried out under the supervision of Michael Killeen, Patrick S. Lougi, Dick Sheehan, John F. O'Donnell and Tom Phillips. The lucky tickets were drawn by Master E. O'Doherty.

FIRST PRIZE: A water-colour, "Labisch P.O." presented by Dr. C. Lynch, won by **Martin Hughes, E. 143 St., N.Y.C.**

SECOND PRIZE: Set of books, presented by Peadar O'Donnell, won by **Miss N. Golden, East 53 St., N.Y.C.**

THIRD PRIZE: Set of James Connolly's works, presented by Hugh McKernan, won by **Miss Jane Pilkington, 1293 Park Ave, N.Y.C.**

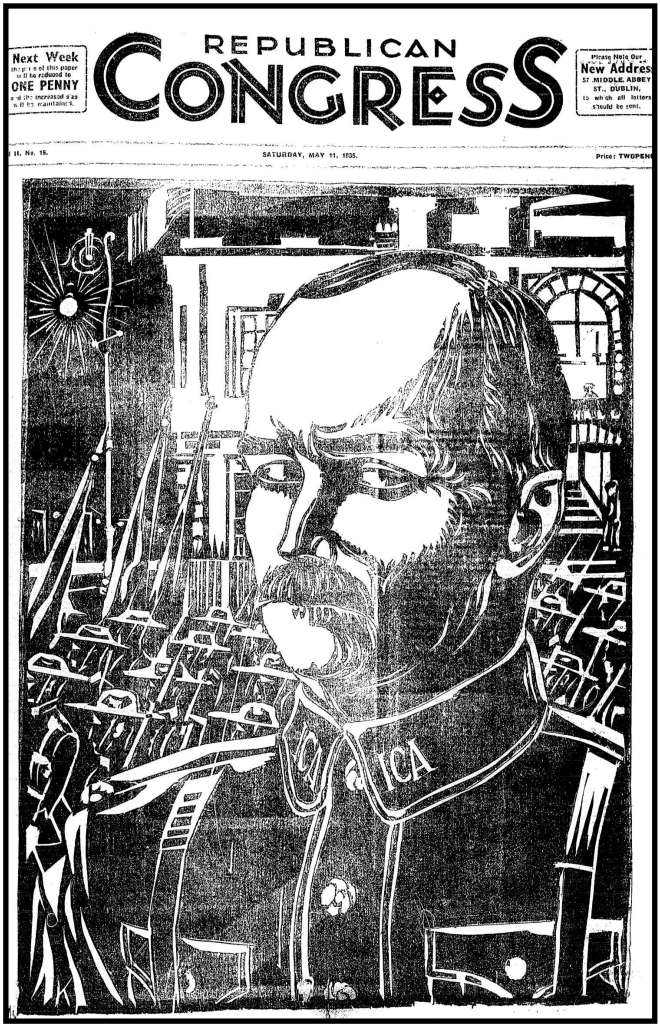
The Committee wishes to thank members of all other city branches who helped through the sale of tickets.

BUFFALO Branch has now taken over a hall to run a social each month. Proceeds will go towards the upkeep of REPUBLICAN CONGRESS. At a Halloween party held on November 13, ten dollars were collected and sent to New York for concussus papers and a subscription to the Central Fund.

The front page of an issue of the 'Republican Congress' series, dated 7/12/1935.

Tom Maguire, a longtime noted IRA commander and Chairman of Westmeath County Council, joined the Republican Congress in the 1930s due to its explicit commitment to a "Workers' Republic." As per Prof. Brian Hanley's 'The IRA, 1926-1936,' he was depicted as a "communist" by others at county council meetings.
(Photo source: Westmeath County Council, 2023)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



This May 1935 edition of the 'Republican Congress' includes cover art of James Connolly.

Sean Murray, a chairperson of the old Communist Party of Ireland, had at one stage been an influential face in the IRA. (Photo source: Irish Workers' Voice 27/10/1934)

MAGUIRE HITS
OUT
FIGHTING CAMPAIGN

Tom Maguire's successful 1934 election campaign to Westmeath County Council as a 'Workers-Republican' candidate is well documented in the 'Republican Congress' newspaper. Among those who spoke at his public meetings included Nora Connolly-O'Brien (daughter of James Connolly) and Michael Price.
(Source: Republican Congress 2/6/1934)

REPUBLICAN CONGRESS delegates. In front can be seen Barney Conway, D. O'Hanlon, Nora Connolly O'Brien, Peadar O'Donnell, S. Saklatvala, Frank Ryan and R. J. Connolly. ("Irish Times" Photo.)

A group photo of delegates to the Republican Congress in Autumn 1934.
(Photo source: Irish Workers' Voice 6/10/1934)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
CUMANN POBLACHTA NA hÉIREANN

The '*Kerry News*' reported on 9 March 1936 that a new Republican organisation, Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann, had issued a manifesto addressed to "the People of Ireland and the Irish Race Abroad," in which it outlined its aims and the actions it intended to take to achieve them. The document had been released after a meeting in Dublin and was signed by 24 individuals who formed the Provisional National Council. At that meeting, P. J. MacLogan of Newry, M.P. for South Armagh, had been chosen as Chairman, while Seán MacBride was appointed Secretary. A twelve-person committee had also been selected to draft a Constitution. Temporary headquarters had been secured at 12 St. Andrew Street, Dublin, while permanent offices were sought. The manifesto recalled the alleged destruction of the Republic fourteen years earlier and claimed that the intervening years had demonstrated that genuine freedom could not be won by abandoning the Republic and then attempting to reclaim it through British constitutional and legal systems - systems which, it argued, had been designed specifically to block such progress. It stated that people increasingly recognised there could be no middle ground between liberty and subjugation - between an Ireland that was united and free, and an Ireland that remained within the British Empire.

The signatories explained that they had taken the initiative to create a Provisional National Council so as to articulate the national call for full independence and separation from England, and to counter what they saw as political decline and the erosion of true national feeling. They emphasised that their intention was not to found another political party, but to create a vehicle capable of giving clear expression to Ireland's national demand. The manifesto also addressed the issue of Partition, stressing the need to rally the entire Irish people to bring it to an end. It stated that Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann's first duty would be to organise and prepare the public to help establish an Irish Republican Government

representing all of Ireland, to extend the Republic's authority across the whole island, and to unite the people behind what it described as the genuine national authority. It noted that the Constitution permitted the use of existing electoral structures to nominate candidates in parliamentary and other elections, while rejecting the idea that the Organisation's aims were subject to legal judgement. Elected candidates, it said, would work with other representatives to repudiate British-imposed institutions and establish a Government of the Republic of Ireland, which it asserted was the true sovereign authority of the Irish people. Finally, the manifesto declared that the Republican Assembly would have to include representation from the Six Counties, whether those representatives were elected or appointed.[279]

The '*Irish People*' also reported in March 1936 that a long-anticipated, fresh IRA-linked political party (known as Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann) was showing clear divisions of opinion within the IRA. While some members supported a full-scale political showdown, the prevailing expectation was that the party's position would remain cautious. Even the inaugural meeting revealed the IRA leadership's significant assertion of power. This concentration of authority, the paper noted, was strongly held within the IRA and openly reflected in Sinn Féin circles. Many ordinary Republicans, particularly those moving away from Fianna Fáil, were reportedly bewildered by the failure of the IRA leaders to form alliances with Sinn Féin. Questions were raised about why prominent figures such as Maud Gonne-MacBride, Brian O'Higgins, and the Rev. Father O'Flanagan were not involved. The paper suggested that some observers believed the IRA leadership was deliberately avoiding strengthening the abstentionist element within the new organisation, and instead appeared focused on distancing itself from Sinn Féin. Compounding these doubts was a perception among workers that the new party's manifesto was largely unrealistic and vague. The '*Irish People*' had suggested that this new move would be "unsatisfactory from a workers' viewpoint."

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[279] *Kerry News 9/3/1936*

The report argued that the IRA leaders had undermined the organisation itself by issuing general orders that contravened the IRA Constitution. Whereas the Constitution allowed any Irishman to join provided he accepted its rules and obeyed his officers, the leadership, the paper claimed, had began expelling revolutionary workers under pressure from certain influential figures. This left the new party caught between abstentionist Sinn Féin, which, in their view, did not fully embrace abstentionism, and the various working-class movements, whose councils offered little attraction. Like many other parties seeking support, the Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann party spoke of social justice in general terms, without a clear policy. The paper criticised the state of Ireland, describing it as dominated by a "virulent economic system" imposed by England. Wealth and resources were said to be controlled largely by foreigners and by local collaborators who had upheld British imperial interests. Privileges and monopolies, originating in conquest and robbery and maintained by British law, were presented as the root causes of the population's poverty and insecurity. According to '*An Phoblacht*,' the new party aimed to replace this system with one based on Christian principles and social justice. It had declared the natural right of every citizen to a livelihood that was proportionate to the nation's wealth and productivity, sub-ordinating vested interests to the welfare of the people. Its objectives included breaking all ties with England, establishing a fully sovereign Irish Republic, ending British imperial influence, eliminating poverty, and securing full rights and freedoms for all citizens. The paper concluded that forming branches of the new party would highlight the IRA leadership's difficulties, as the realities of Irish society would make it clear that no single new party could achieve independence alone. The effort, it argued, would require the combined force of all independence-minded organisations.[280]

The '*Sunday Independent*' reported in June 1936 that a new branch of Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann in Asdee, North Kerry had featured a protest against the arrest of Republicans

[280] *Irish People 14/3/1936*

by the Fianna Fáil led government. Mr. M. Keane was elected branch chairman, with Mr. M. King elected as vice-chairman.[281]

In July 1936, the '*Irish Independent*' outlined that at a meeting of the Tullaghan, County Leitrim branch of Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann, the "arrests of those who are patriotically endeavouring to obtain the freedom of the country" was condemned, and demanded the "unconditional release of all Republicans imprisoned in all of Ireland; the abolition of the Coercion Act, and an inquiry into the treatment of prisoners."[282]

At the close of July 1936, the '*Derry Journal*' had reported that the 'Republican Election Committee' in Dublin had outlined that at a largely attended convention of Sinn Féin and Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann, held in Galway, George Noble Count Plunkett was unanimously selected as the Republican Candidate to contest a forthcoming by-election. The Republican Election Committee remarked that:

> *"This is not the first time the Count has stood as the Republican Standard-bearer in the West. He successfully raised the Republican banner in the famous Roscommon Election in 1917, being the first Sinn Féin candidate elected on the abstentionist policy. Subsequently, in Dáil Éireann he was Minister for Foreign Affairs and later Minister for Fine Arts."*

The statement was signed by Messrs. Seán MacBride and Liam Gilmore.[283]

The '*Irish Independent*' reported in November 1936 that since its formation six months earlier, 81 branches of Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann had already been formed and

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[281] *Sunday Independent 7/6/1936*

[282] *Irish Independent 4/7/1936*

[283] *Derry Journal 31/7/1936*

affiliated. Co-organising Committees had been formed in practically every county, as per the report of Mr. Seán MacBride, National Secretary, read at the first Ard Fheis of Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann in Wynn's Hotel, Dublin City centre. The Ard Fheis featured many resolutions proposed by the National Directorate and new branches were registered. Mr. P. MacLogan, M.P., presided. The following were elected to the National Council: Messrs. Seán MacBride, P. J. MacLogan, M.P.; Michael Fitzpatrick, Donal O'Donoghue, Mrs. Stack, Dr. MacKee, Seán MacSwiney, Miss Nodlag Brugha, T. Daly, A. Lynn B.L., Madame MacBride, Mr. S. Lennon, Miss May Laverty, Mr. H. O'Reilly, The O'Rahilly B.L, Messrs. E. Humphries, S. Mallin, E. Gallin, Miss Fionn Plunkett, and Dr. Keena.

Among the resolutions passed included:

- That in view of the announcement made that it is proposed to issue a new Constitution for the Saorstát, this Ard Fheis declares that Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann is opposed to a Constitution which does not contain the recognition of the sovereignty and unfettered right of the Irish nation.
- That in view of the unavoidable effects of a potential world war, the granting of all concessions to foreign industrialists and financiers interested in the Irish Free State was dangerous for the national interest.
- The Ard Fheis urged the incoming National Director to proceed with the establishment of a sub-committee to ensure the formation of a social and economic policy. This committee would examine the best means of launching a propaganda campaign leading towards an understanding amongst the population of what monetary control means to the people of Ireland; that without such State monetary control, any government set up in the name of the Republic would be valueless, and would only comply with the "ungodly" system that was ""bleeding the world to death."

Speaking at the conference, Mr. Patrick MacLogan MP outlined that the banning of the IRA and the wholesale arrest

of IRA members by the Fianna Fáil-led government were among the events which closely affected organisation.[284]

A front-page editorial by the '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' in October 1937 asserted that, to their mind, the time has arrived when all Republicans, meaning Irish Republicans, should come together in earnest conference, and with honesty and goodwill, make a supreme effort to join their forces and go forward to the success that they believed had awaited them, but that wouldn't simply just come back to them. They were strongly of the view that, weak as they may have appeared to have been when compared to the big parties that fought the General Election during the Summer, there was the makings of a go-ahead powerful organisation in Sinn Féin, Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann and the other odds and ends of Separatist bodies that were scattered about, simply "marking time or standing still," while a major and golden opportunity to catch the eye, ear and the heart and the mind of the country was slipping away from them.[285]

In April 1938, Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann participated in a Republican commemoration alongside Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBán, the IRA, the National Graves Association, Mná na Poblachta, Fianna Éireann, Clann na nGael, Cumann na gCáilíní, Cumann Óglaigh na hÉireann, led by bands composed of the Workers' Union of Ireland and the Laurence O'Tooles. As reported in the '*Irish Press*,' Mary MacSwiney gave a blistering speech in which she attacked the government of Éire, led by the administration of Eamon de Valera.[286]

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[284] *Irish Independent 9/11/1936*

[285] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 16/10/1937*

[286] *Irish Press 18/4/1938*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

Muintear na h-Eireann

THE IRISH PEOPLE

VOL. 1. No. 3. SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1936. PRICE TWOPENCE

WILL THE NEW I.R.A. PARTY ENTER THE DAIL?

Abstention Resisted at Inaugural Meeting

WORKERS NOT IMPRESSED: SINN FEIN SCEPTICAL

The long expected I.R.A. party has at last been launched after sharp differences of opinion on whether members should enter the Dail.

It is generally believed that its issue has been resolved and that the full weight of opinion in favouring of entering Leinster House has delayed a show down pending the first national Congress of the party when it is expected that their position will be strengthened.

Even the inaugural meeting showed their presence in power. This opinion is strongly held within the I.R.A. and is openly voiced in Sinn Fein.

The average Republican who is moving away from Fianna Fail is bewildered by the failure of the I.R.A. leaders to team up with Sinn Fein. What kind of an abstention party is it that can't bring in Miss McSwiney, Brian O'Higgins, Father O'Flanagan, etc.? And they therefore justify farm this opinion that the I.R.A. leaders are afraid to strengthen the abstentionist factor within the present position, and are, in fact, only organising an escape from the Sinn Fein elements within the I.R.A.

Added to the suspicion, which weakens the new party on the right, is the more harmful suspicion of the morality of its manifesto from a workers' viewpoint.

The I.R.A. leaders smashed the I.R.A. by issuing general orders which destroyed the spirit of the I.R.A. Constitution.

The Constitution said any Irishman could join provided he accepted the Constitution and was prepared to obey his officers. But the leaders ran amok under the whip of James Hogan and his ilk, and began expelling revolutionary workers. Now they are caught between Sinn Fein, which does not believe their are abstentionists, and working class movements which see in their council of twenty-four little to attract them.

In common with every other party seeking votes the new party declares for social justice in vague generalities: "The people of Ireland live under a social and economic system which was imposed by England. Through the operation of this alien system a majority of the people exist under conditions which are little better than slavery. Almost the entire wealth and resources of the country are owned and controlled by aliens, and by that section of the nation which supports and fosters the British Imperial system. Privileges and monopolies have been created which have their origin in conquest and robbery and which are upheld by a British law without moral right or sanction. It is largely through the power thus wielded that England and her allies enforce their domination to the detriment of the rights and interests of the vast majority of Irish citizens.

"Cumann Poblachta na hEireann aims at substituting for this state of affairs 'a reign of social justice based on Christian principles, by a just distribution of the nation's wealth and resources.' It is the natural right of each citizen to be afforded a livelihood to the fullest extent that the wealth and productivity of the nation will permit. Vested interests and privileges must be subordinated to the welfare and happiness of the people."

And in common with the general run of national bodies also it declares its object, to be to break the connection with England: "to enthrone the sovereign united Irish Republic"; to end the whole British Imperial system; to end poverty and insecurity and to provide a full and free life for all the people in the fullest enjoyment of their sovereign rights and powers.

The formation of branches of the new organisation will increase the difficulties of I.R.A. leaders, for facing realities will make it clear to Republicans around the I.R.A. that no new party solves anything.

It will take the full force of all independence parties to achieve the independence goal.

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C.P.S.

"IF THE CAP FITS—"

It is reported in the press that the 1916 Volunteer Hat is to supersede the beret as the uniform hat of Fein O'Duffy's Fascist force.

Inside Story of Great Jail Rescue

Exclusive to *THE IRISH PEOPLE*

Next week George Gilmore will describe the jail break of 1925 when he himself, disguised as a Sergeant of the Civic Guards, in charge of other "guards" taking sentenced "politicians" to Mountjoy, seized the jail and liberated republican prisoners.

It is a breath-taking tale told with an absolutely criminal understatement. But what an achievement it was. Make sure of your copy. Order it now, for the series of articles of which this chapter is the opening will be something to treasure. It is secret history laid bare to the roots.

And no greater service could be done a friend in exile than to send him "The Irish People" weekly with this series of articles running in it.

Next Week: BREAKING INTO MOUNTJOY JAIL

The rescue of prisoners in 1925. How the job was done. Specially contributed to "The Irish People," by GEORGE GILMORE, who did it.

Why Grow Wheat?

A Grumble Answered

THE old fable that we can't grow wheat in Ireland is well punctured. We grow wheat now for our own use, as though we had never been told by each eminent man in Ernest Blythe, Paddy MacGilligan, Paddy Hogan, that it just couldn't be done without a small revolution. Not that we grow up to the level of our needs yet. According to Dr. Ryan's figures we shall not produce to meet half our requirements until 1939.

But there is no denying that good work has been done in this field. In 1932 only 20,000 acres were under wheat. In 1935 there were 103,000.

And not only was the area extended in this way, but also the yield per area has improved by an extra five per cent.

And yet wise men like Ernest Blythe, Paddy MacGilligan and Paddy Hogan said in their report on wheat growing in 1928 that, as the area under cultivation extended the yield per acre would fall. And if you do get tells to grow wheat, their report ran on, they'll do it by cutting down the area under oats and barley. But this is not true either. The total area under all corn crops has actually increased by 103,000 acres. So that farmers clearly are not following the three ex-Ministers' lead in the tilling of the soil.

But while the farmers are heeding their backs to co-operate with the

(Continued on page 8).

"Mr. Cosgrave is the Man for the Chair"

HARMONY AT U.I.P. CONVENTION

(By a Truthful Correspondent).

MR. WILLIAM COSGRAVE gathered the relics of solid decency round him at the Gore Tandee last Thursday—the Mansion House is a draughty house for a few people—and Mr. Dillon got up at once and said he didn't agree with Cosgrave the time Cosgrave was out holding for a Republic, but now he agreed with Cosgrave, because Mr. Cosgrave wasn't looking for a Republic, and so he thought Mr. Cosgrave was the man for the chair.

And Mr. E. Cronin said he was of the same mind as Mr. Dillon that Mr. Cosgrave was the man for the chair.

And then the prince that was there, said Mr. Cosgrave was the right man for the chair.

And Dick Mulcahy said, too, that Mr. Cosgrave was the man for the chair; and what's more, says Dick, we're not going to stand for a government that lays the best bulls in order to kill the calves.

So, at that, Mr. Cosgrave took the chair.

And as soon as Mr. Cosgrave made a move towards the chair everybody joined in cheer, and there, when the cheering was over, Mr. Cosgrave said the Irish Land Commission was the best he like the Russian control of agriculture as to make no difference to he was against that. He was against the Soviet Union instead. What he stood for was for Ireland to corner her slobs-down system the Empire and be left in peace to enjoy it. It was rascals trying to shoot Ireland out of the Empire that made him them Jems Dillon from the North of Ballaghderreen, and him the bagpipe

(Continued on page 8).

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M. W. O'REILLY, F.C.I.I., Managing Director.

(Photo source: The Irish People 14/3/1936)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE IRA & CUMANN NA mBÁN CRUSADE AGAINST CAPITALISM

As featured in a July 1924 edition of the '*Sinn Féin*' newspaper, it was reported that Patrick J. Ruttledge, 'Acting President' of the grouping in the Dáil that did not recognise the Dáil of the Irish Free State as legitimate, issued a telegram to the Colonial Secretary in Westminster. It detailed the following:

> *"Thomas*
> *British Colonial Secretary,*
> *Downing Street, London.*
>
> ***REFERENCE TO YOUR STATEMENT RE SO-CALLED TREATY IN HOUSE OF COMMONS YESTERDAY.***
>
> *The so-called Anglo-Irish Treaty is not a settlement of Anglo-Irish relations. Such a settlement will be reached only when the talons of the British Empire are finally withdrawn or removed from Ireland. Your attitude, presumably also that of the British Government, is the historic attitude of Imperial Capitalism, which cannot have the support of the English Labour movement, and which has been responsible in the past as it must continue, if persisted in, to be responsible in the future for the suffering and unrest in and material damage to both Ireland and England.*
>
> *There can be no friendship between Ireland and England except on the basis of the recognition of the existing Irish Republic.*
>
> ***RUTTLEDGE,***
> ***Acting President**."*[287]

[287] *Sinn Féin 5/7/1924*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

In 1925, '*Sinn Féin*' reported on a county council campaign rally in County Roscommon. The speakers focused largely on the various clauses and enactments contained in the so-called "new Dora" Treason-Felony Act, introduced by those who styled themselves as the "Apostles of the Will of the People." They emphasised the likelihood that this legislation would lead to the suppression of organisations bold enough to criticise public expenditure or government policy, under the authority of British-appointed officials reminiscent of former Cromwells or Calcrafts. Particular attention was given to the clauses restricting the rights of labour, as well as the Free State administration's measures designed to safeguard landlord interests, capitalist gain, and profiteering. Several speakers also discussed the substantial sums claimed by the Free State for pension payments, the management of public services, and the extravagant promises - viewed as little more than empty inducements - made by the Merrion Street authorities in an effort to secure the support of farmers. Most of the campaign meetings were well-attended and harmonious, with the exception of one held at Fair Roads. There, a local clergyman disrupted proceedings by questioning the damage caused during the Civil War. He repeatedly left for the parochial house to gather further material to support his claim that the Republican movement had inflicted destruction valued at roughly £100,000,000 - comprising the £50 million cited by Mr. Blythe, and another £50 million allegedly required to repair the subsequent damage. However, when presented with accurate figures, the reverend gentleman quietly withdrew, leaving the audience to cheer enthusiastically for the speaker, Jack O'Sheehan, whose composure and wit had clearly unsettled his interrogator. Overall, the meetings were conducted in a spirit of unity and optimism, suggesting strong prospects for a decisive victory for the Republican candidate. Other speakers at the various gatherings included Councillor Paul D. O'Rourke (former T.D.), Mr. Williams, Alec Lynn, B.L., J. Burke, Co. C., Jack O'Sheehan, the candidate "Sceilg," Mr. O'Duffy, M. Walsh, Mr. Buckley, J. Brady, M. J. Kennedy, Cu Ulad, B. Mellowes, and Phil Ryan.[288]

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[288] *Sinn Féin 21/2/1925*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

In August 1926, '*An Phoblacht*' published an article in which, in seeking to define the idea of a Gaelic State, the author had referred to its economic basis mainly - for that basis was the least understood and the most neglected. The economic foundation, he had essayed to prove, had been the great bulwark against conquest. A reason for the neglect that scholars had bestowed upon it was also given. By attempting to explain it in terms of capitalist states, they had deprived themselves of any chance of comprehending it. Translating the term "Gaelic State" into the language of modern labour, it was called the "Workers' Republic." Similarly, the author claimed, rendering it in international terms, it became the "Co-operative Commonwealth." In all of these formulations, however, the Gaelic State remained essentially Irish. A return to the old Gaelic state was, in the author's view, not only a desirability but also a necessity. Within the limits of a single article, the full structure of the Gaelic State could not be adequately examined. In this piece, therefore, he confined himself to a vindication alone. There was no need to seek fundamental principles outside Ireland's own shores. Connolly and Pearse had already outlined the programme. The author asserted that it was a historical fact that the Bolsheviks who "freed" Russia had been led by men who studied James Connolly's writings and followed his career. That, he argued, was Russia's tribute to Ireland. For the Irish people, he suggested learning from the free nations of the world by all means, and keeping abreast of Europe too - but crucially, always on Ireland's own terms, and on the basis of the Gaelic State.[289]

'*An Phoblacht*' ran an article, titled "The Dictatorship of the Gael," which appeared on 17 September 1926 and set out a bold, radical republican vision for the future of Ireland. Written by A. A. Reynolds, it rejected what it depicted as passive nationalism, ceremonial patriotism, and mere parliamentary agitation, calling instead for a revolutionary social and economic transformation grounded in Irish control of Irish resources. The piece had articulated a distinctly

[289] *An Phoblacht 6/8/1926*

republican socialist programme, framing it not as a utopian dream, but as a necessary and practical response to the economic and political subordination of the Irish Free State. The article opened with a warning against "indiscriminating admiration of the past", which, it argued, was a symptom of national decline. The author observed that invoking the names of historical figures like Wolfe Tone or James Fintan Lalor without acting on their revolutionary ideals amounted to a form of intellectual stagnation. These old ideas, Reynolds wrote, had "gone mouldy," and modern Ireland had to stand on its own feet rather than relying on the ghosts of past struggles. The spirit of the age was not 1798, 1848 or 1916, he insisted, but a new moment demanding a fresh reconstruction of Irish society, rooted in the real conditions of the present. Reynolds described the "organic development of the nation" as something that could not simply repeat old forms or creeds. While the legacy of past revolutionaries provided inspiration, it was not sufficient to shape the future. The Ireland of 1926, he argued, required a "new redistribution of men and resources," one based on social and economic necessity as well as political change. National independence, he asserted, had to mean more than a constitutional or political arrangement - it had to involve a radical reorganisation of economic power. The writer then attacked the "romantic liberalism" and superficial cultural nationalism that had dominated the independence movement. By focusing on ceremonial symbols and parliamentary ritual, he argued, the nationalist movement had failed to tackle the "underlying forces" that shaped Ireland's dependence. He accused past leaders of fetishising political forms while neglecting economic questions, particularly those involving land ownership, labour, and the control of production. National independence, he wrote, would be meaningless unless it also involved the emancipation of the Irish people from economic subjugation.

Reynolds outlined a programme of practical, radical reform that he believed was essential to achieving true Irish independence. First among these was the return of the soil of Ireland to the people of Ireland. He argued for the taxation of land values, the abolition of unearned landlord income, and

the reorganisation of land use so that it served the interests of cultivators rather than speculators or absentee landlords. He linked this vision to a wider economic transformation: control of banking and credit would need to be placed in the hands of producers, not speculators. The Stock Exchange, representing the "ascendancy" class, would need to be broken. Industrial profits, he argued, should be redirected from foreign owners back to national development. The article also addressed foreign trade and tariffs, insisting that an independent Ireland had to shape its economic relations on its own terms. Reynolds called for an end to dependence on British commercial dominance, arguing that if Ireland was to be truly independent, it had to "develop its own miserable half-fed resources" into a self-sustaining economy. He proposed regulating imports, protecting Irish industries, and ensuring that Irish harbours were used to benefit the Irish economy rather than foreign shipping interests. Turning to housing, Reynolds identified the housing crisis as a national question. He proposed a conference of employers, workers, and public representatives to address the problem, advocating for public housing construction to stimulate employment and provide decent living conditions. He saw this as a way to tie national regeneration to material improvements in the lives of ordinary people, rather than mere symbolic gestures of statehood. Education formed another key pillar of his vision. Reynolds insisted that education had to be oriented toward the needs of a free nation rather than perpetuating colonial hierarchies. He called for compulsory agricultural education, technical training for craftsmen, and the establishment of industrial and vocational schools that would equip young people to build a self-sufficient Ireland. He wanted to bring libraries, schools, and educational resources to rural communities, mirroring what was available in towns. He criticised universities and elite schools for being detached from the people, warning that they served the "intellectual life of Ascendancy" rather than the Gael.

The article then moved to the role of youth and national character. Reynolds believed that a new generation had to be educated not merely to serve existing economic interests, but also to build a co-operative commonwealth. He wished for

young people to inherit not the ideological trappings of nationalism, but also its practical tasks: reclaiming the soil, reshaping production, and organising for collective economic power. The struggle, he insisted, was not simply for independence from England but for a social order fundamentally different from capitalism. Reynolds also addressed the housing of rural labourers and urban workers, arguing that technical schools and apprenticeships should give every man the opportunity to work productively at home, thereby reducing emigration. This, he wrote, would help stem the "devastating tide of migration" that drained Irish communities of their strength and left families scattered abroad. A nation that could not provide for its youth, he argued, could not claim to be truly free. He anticipated resistance from those "who hold the land but do not know how to use it" and from commercial interests who benefited from the status quo. He made it clear that the "Dictatorship of the Gael" would not be a gentle or romantic revolution, but a determined assertion of national rights against entrenched privilege. If necessary, he declared, the stability of property rights would have to be challenged to secure the "right to live at home." In conclusion, Reynolds argued that true Irish freedom required more than the abolition of the Union. It required a "complete, final and absolute independence" - political, economic, and cultural. The "Dictatorship of the Gael" was, in his view, not tyranny but the organised assertion of the people's will against imperial and capitalist forces. It was a call for Irish control of Irish land, industry, and credit, and for the building of a national commonwealth based on collective economic co-operation, and not of exploitation.[290]

In an opinion piece featured in a March 1931 edition of '*An Phoblacht*,' the leading IRA activist George Gilmore responded to contemporary debates surrounding proposals for a new Irish constitution and the broader question of economic justice. Writing polemically, Gilmore asserted that confusion persisted regarding the nature of the existing social system, the feasibility of altering it, and the moral

[290] *An Phoblacht 17/9/1926*

consequences of such change - particularly in a society strongly influenced by the Catholic Church. Gilmore argued that the prevailing system, or "lack of system", was founded upon the private ownership of capital, land, and industry. He suggested that laissez-faire economics had been promoted as the ideal policy for government, with free trade and freedom of contract presented as universal remedies for social ills. According to Gilmore, the historical results of this approach were deeply damaging. He maintained that human intellect and welfare were subordinated to profit, citing examples such as brutal factory labour, excessive working hours, and the exploitation of women in mines in Britain less than a century earlier. Gilmore noted that such practices were not abolished through moral protest by religious authorities, and he contended that similarly glaring injustices continued to exist in Ireland in his own time.

He declared that these contemporary evils demanded redress, and while both Socialists and Distributists claimed to offer solutions, they did so by fundamentally different methods. Gilmore summarised the Socialist position as the belief that private ownership of the means of production and distribution inevitably led to industries being run for the benefit of owners rather than the community. He asserted that goods were produced not because they were socially necessary, but because they were profitable. As illustrative examples, Gilmore pointed to the production of luxury goods amid widespread poverty, the construction of grand cinemas while thousands lived in single-room tenements in Dublin, and the export or distillation of foodstuffs while basic nutrition remained unavailable to many. Gilmore contrasted this with what he described as the "ignorant" argument that inequality arose not from private ownership itself, but merely from its concentration in the hands of a few. He suggested that proponents of this view sought to resolve inequality by turning everyone into a small capitalist. Gilmore rejected this outright, arguing that even if wealth were equally distributed at a given moment, inequality would soon re-emerge through inheritance, chance, and the exploitation of labour. He maintained that such proposals failed to address the structural

causes of inequality and merely reproduced capitalism in a new form.

As an alternative, Gilmore concluded that the correct solution lay in the socialisation of industry. He clarified that this did not simply mean state nationalisation carried out without regard for workers. He criticised existing examples of nationalised industries, which he claimed often used state power against employees in pursuit of fiscal savings. Gilmore argued instead for a decentralised and democratic form of socialism, involving workers' control through factory committees and local management of services such as bakeries, dairies, gasworks, and waterworks, coordinated within a national economic plan. He asserted that under such a system, private capital and profit as motives for production would be abolished. Work, Gilmore maintained, would be understood as a social obligation rather than a means of private enrichment. He insisted that this did not entail the abolition of personal property, noting that individuals would continue to own personal possessions such as homes, clothing, and vehicles. What would be prohibited, he argued, was private profiteering through the exploitation of others' labour. Gilmore emphasised that such a transformation required not merely a change of government, but a profound change in social outlook. He suggested that prevailing moral attitudes persisted only because capitalism was accepted as natural, in the same way that belief in a flat earth had once seemed reasonable. He warned that if religious institutions attempted to defend capitalism as a matter of faith or morals, they would ultimately be swept aside by historical forces.

In a further contribution titled 'An Equal Distribution of Liberty,' Gilmore returned to the debate, criticising what he described as confused thinking regarding individual ownership of productive property. He observed that concepts such as liberty and Christianity were frequently invoked as slogans, both by defenders of capitalism and by wartime propagandists during the First World War. Gilmore argued that the mobilisation of Popes and saints by both sides demonstrated that the issue should be examined primarily from an economic, rather than a theological, perspective. He

rejected the claim that community ownership of productive property implied collective ownership of personal, non-productive possessions. Addressing critics who asserted that the primary motive for labour was the acquisition of private property, Gilmore denied that this was true in the case of productive property. He contended instead that people worked to secure maintenance, education, and security for themselves and their families, and that these were not productive assets but merely an individual's share in collectively produced goods. Gilmore further argued that community ownership was frequently attacked on the grounds that it restricted individual liberty. He countered that all social systems necessarily involved some limitation of liberty, and that the relevant question was which system provided the most equal distribution of liberty. He concluded that community ownership achieved this goal by preventing one individual from exploiting the labour of another.

He conceded that private ownership allowed extensive liberty to a small minority, but only at the expense of the majority, particularly wage-earners without property. Gilmore criticised Distributist claims that capitalism could be made just through fair wages, arguing that the employer's right to appropriate surplus labour remained fundamentally exploitative. He rejected the notion that abolishing private ownership violated an individual's right to the products of their labour, asserting that such rights were already denied under capitalism. Gilmore concluded by asserting that private ownership necessarily divided society into property-owners and non-owners, and that this division was incompatible with genuine liberty or social justice. He remarked pointedly that even some critics of socialism privately acknowledged that community ownership was "more Christian" than capitalism, yet continued to oppose it publicly. He suggested that such contradictions only delayed an inevitable resolution of the issue.[291]

In October 1931, '*An Phoblacht*' ran an article which situated the ongoing slum-housing crisis not as a moral failing or an

[291] *An Phoblacht 7/3/1931*

unfortunate by-product of urban growth, but as a direct consequence of capitalist control of credit. While public debate was saturated with humanitarian outrage and religious indignation, such responses were exposed as ultimately hollow when they failed to challenge the financial structures that perpetuated slum conditions. The article was particularly scathing of proposals that placed banks at the centre of housing reform. Through portraying financial institutions as prospective "rescuers of slumland", the author highlighted the irony of entrusting the very agents of exploitation with solving a crisis from which they profited. The critique of interest-bearing loans was central: housing schemes financed through private or bank credit inevitably required rents high enough to service interest and repay capital, thereby reproducing poverty rather than alleviating it. A key strength of the piece lay in its demystification of banking. Rather than treating money as scarce, the article reframed credit as abundant but monopolised. The revelation that banks held vast sums of the people's deposits while extracting profits of 250 to 300 per cent was used to expose banking as parasitic rather than productive. This framing aligned with a broader republican-socialist tradition that viewed finance capital as unearned power exercised over labour and community life.

The use of Dublin as a case study grounded the argument in material reality. By converting weekly relief payments into their equivalent capital value, the article demonstrated how state spending on poverty relief was both inefficient and degrading. Relief was described not only as inadequate but as dehumanising, reserved for those reduced to starvation. In contrast, access to low-interest public credit could have transformed "paupers and beggars" into workers engaged in socially useful labour, restoring dignity alongside material security. Importantly, the article rejected incremental reform and moral posturing. Those who decried slums without advocating public control of banking were branded hypocrites, their concern revealed as performative rather than genuine. This uncompromising tone had reflected 'An Phoblacht's' insistence that social problems could not be solved without confronting underlying power relations. In conclusion, the article advanced a radical yet coherent

solution: public ownership and democratic control of banking and credit. Housing, employment, and social welfare were presented as inseparable from financial sovereignty. Slums, in this analysis, were not an accident of history, but a policy choice sustained by private control of credit. Only through reclaiming that control, the article contended, could society eradicate not just slums, but the wider social and economic injustices that gave rise to them. It signed off by declaring:

> "*Public ownership with control of Banking and Credit is the solution. not only of the slums, but of many other social and economic evils of to-day*."[292]

An issue of the '*Republican File*' from January 1932 reported on an Irish Republican meeting chaired by Madame Maud Gonne MacBride at Wynn's Hotel, Dublin City. He asserted that the particular brand of the Communist system as seen in Russia was quite unsuited to Ireland. However, he instead advocated a small system of communes of about 5,000 people, who would, so far as was possible, control their own affairs, and the establishment of factories, so that the communes could produce all their own requirements, and export their surplus. He believed that Socialism as such was largely in existence because land was practically taken over by the Government, and railways were controlled or their operation was dictated by the State.[293]

In a report from April 1932 titled 'England, Damn your Concessions. We Want our Country,' '*An Phoblacht*' presented an IRA commemoration held in Drogheda as a reaffirmation of republican allegiance and a rejection of compromise with British rule. The paper described how, following a Commemoration Mass in St. Peter's, Drogheda, a large procession formed, led by the Drogheda Brass and Reed Band, the Volunteers of the local I.R.A. unit, and members of the Town Corporation. Thousands marched to

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[292] *An Phoblacht 3/10/1931*

[293] *Republican File 16/1/1932*

the outskirts of the town to the monument erected to the victims of imperialism and its supporters during the conflicts of 1920 and 1922. According to the report, Councillor P. Carroll opened proceedings by reading the Proclamation of the Irish Republic of 1916 before introducing Michael Price. Price read a statement from the Army Council and then elaborated on its political meaning. '*An Phoblacht*' emphasised that Price addressed the crowd as citizens who had already declared their allegiance to the Irish Republic and to the principles of the 1916 Proclamation. He argued that this allegiance required continuous public testimony and the active persuasion of those less politically conscious, asserting that Ireland was a nation entitled to freedom from British political and economic exploitation. The paper highlighted his insistence that the threat of extermination historically issued by Britain against Ireland must be resisted rather than accommodated. The report stressed that Price rooted his argument firmly in the Proclamation's declaration that ownership of Ireland rested with the Irish people and that civil liberty, equal rights, and equal opportunities were owed to all citizens. From this, 'An Phoblacht noted, he reasoned that not only the oath of allegiance contained in the Free State Constitution but all the burdens arising from the Treaty settlement must be rejected. These burdens were described as having impoverished the nation and driven hundreds of thousands of people into emigration over the previous decade. The paper recorded his further assertion that the aims of the 1916 Proclamation could not be realised while Ireland remained bound to an imperial capitalist order inherited from the British connection.

'*An Phoblacht*' presented Price's argument that political independence alone was insufficient without a fundamental transformation of social and economic relations. He maintained that Ireland could not be freed from imperial domination until the capitalist system itself was dismantled and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange in both industry and agriculture was vested in the Irish people. The paper linked this analysis to persistent poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and poor housing, noting that these conditions affected Dublin and Belfast, Drogheda

and the Gaeltacht, Derry and Cork alike. The report also highlighted Price's criticism of conservative opinion in Ireland, which, he argued, refused to allow discussion of social reconstruction and condemned any challenge to production for profit. '*An Phoblacht*' framed his remarks as identifying a growing revival of moral courage in Ireland, evidenced by recent electoral defeats of forces associated with imperialism, intolerance, and reaction. These forces were linked to coercive legislation and clerical interventions against republican and working-class politics. Finally, the paper emphasised Price's call for this renewed courage to be transformed into unified and decisive action capable of overwhelming the institutions of imperial authority and their allies, particularly financial interests. To achieve this, '*An Phoblacht*' reported, he urged support for organisations that had remained steadfast in their loyalty to the principles of the Proclamation of the Republic: the Irish Republican Army, Cumann na mBan, and Fianna na hÉireann. He concluded by proclaiming that their slogans should be:

> *"England, damn your concessions - we want our country!"*

And,

> *"Long live the Irish Workers' Republic!"*

The feature presented the Drogheda commemoration as both a memorial to past struggle and a declaration of intent for continued resistance grounded in republican and socialist principles.[294]

In another article from April 1932, this time on the topic of the the Anglo-Irish Treaty, '*An Phoblacht*' expressed the view that the Settlement must be rejected as a necessary step toward the realisation of the 1916 Proclamation's ideals. The paper emphasised that the Proclamation had guaranteed "equal rights and opportunities to all citizens" and had committed the Irish people to "pursue the happiness and

[294] *An Phoblacht 12/4/1932*

prosperity of the whole nation, and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the Nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government which divided a minority from the majority in the past." '*An Phoblacht*' argued that the Treaty had violated these principles and should be repudiated as a preliminary measure to establishing a Workers' Republic encompassing all thirty-two counties of Ireland. The paper asserted that England was no longer in a position to coerce Ireland by military force or by economic blockade. It maintained that Britain could no longer prevent Ireland from leaving the Empire, and that the only recourse remaining to England was to negotiate with the Irish people, attempting to secure national freedom while retaining economic control. '*An Phoblacht*' emphasised that economic enslavement was at least as significant - and in practical terms often more pressing - than formal political subordination, and that England would prioritise preserving this economic domination above any symbolic oaths of allegiance. The article called on Irish citizens to fulfil their duty by asserting and defending their freedom on both national and economic grounds. '*An Phoblacht*' framed the repudiation of the Treaty as a moral and practical obligation, summarising its position with the slogans: "No bargaining with England!" and "No connection with the British Empire!" The paper presented this stance as essential not only for national independence but also for achieving genuine social and economic liberation for all citizens, in accordance with the revolutionary vision of 1916.[295]

In August 1932, an '*An Phoblacht*' article, titled "The Bankers' Army," detailed the formation and activities of "Dr. O'Higgins' Army," an established force in Ireland, which had been widely perceived as a tool manipulated by bankers to precipitate a civil war and an economic crisis. The piece highlighted the army's initial public appearance, which had taken place in the cities of Dublin and Cork. During this event, the force had combined with Beasley's contingent, amassing a muster of nearly 250 strong in Dublin alone. However, the parades had proven disappointing, with sparse

[295] *An Phoblacht 16/4/1932*

crowds showing little enthusiasm, and some spectators had even lacked the motivation to applaud the proceedings. With the exception of the usual pro-Free State newspapers such as the '*Cork Examiner*,' the '*Irish Times*,' the '*Irish Independent*' and the English dailies, the provincial press had subjected such an "army" to scathing coverage, branding it with derogatory labels such as "Hitler Organisation," "Fascist Army," "Generational Higgins," and "Salvation Army," reflecting a broad undercurrent of disapproval across the region. The London-based '*New Age*' newspaper had attributed the creation of this force to the machinations of bankers, who had sought to destabilise Ireland's economic situation, potentially triggering a civil war. It was declared that "the bankers have begun to enrol an army of their own in Ireland… the Army Comrades Association." '*An Phoblacht*' asserted that the IRA would have to defeat such a force. The tone of the article had been sharply critical, urging readers to closely observe the techniques that bankers had employed and calling for the immediate dissolution of O'Higgins' Army. It argued that the bankers had feared losing their grip on power, and had thus raised a relatively small and negligible force to precipitate an economic crisis. The article concluded with a fervent plea to "scrap them now," asserting that figures like Higgins and Mulcahy, who had previously been central to the movement, must not have been permitted to have their way. It emphasised that the bankers' influence had to be broken, and that the "army" had already begun employing aggressive tactics in its operations.[296]

An issue of the '*United Irishman*' from October 1932 devised a ditty that praised the original Free State administration and mocked its various opponents. Crucial to this is verse two, which quips:

> *"'Up the Republic!' Who answers to that call?*
> *IRA or GPU, or even Fianna Fáil?*
> *'Up the Republic,' said Brian and Mary Mac,*
> *We stood by the Republic and never turned back.*
> *We have only one voice - we're honest if we're few,*

[296] *An Phoblacht 27/8/1932*

The dear old Republic of Roisin Dhu.
'Phsaw,' said the Gilmores - 'you're sadly out of date,'
'We want a Communistic, Bolshevistic State.'
'Right,' said the young lads - we'll have it on the spot,'
'We don't care which Republic - but we'd like to have a shot!'"

A neighbouring contribution on the same page also asserted the emergence of such a fear, and remarked on the Economic War that:

> "*A country reduced to poverty and destitution as ours will be if this economic war continues, cannot escape the poisonous influence of Bolshevism*."[297]

In late October 1932, 'An Phoblacht' reported in an article titled 'The Only Army that Ireland Needs' that there was a very large gathering at Newmarket, Co. Cork. The aeridheacht, which was organised by the local Battalion of the I.R.A., was held in a field outside the town, and to it marched a procession composed of an I.R.A. contingent that was 100 strong, Cumann na mBan, and Fianna Éireann, headed by the Cork Volunteer Pipers' Band and the Kiskeam Brass Band, carrying flags and banners. George Gilmore, in opening the aeridheacht, urged all Republicans to insist that the one and only army to be tolerated in Ireland should be the army that took its stand upon the Republican Proclamation of Easter Week, 1916 - that had stood for the independence of the sovereign Irish Republic and the complete ownership of the land and other wealth-producing resources of Ireland by the Irish people. He stated that the 100,000 unemployed in Belfast, those in the rest of Ireland, and the hard-pressed working farmers were all Irish citizens, and as such, were, according to the 1916 Proclamation, entitled to "equal rights and equal opportunities" with the rest of the people of Ireland. He asserted that the function of the I.R.A. would not be fulfilled until all those people were secure in a decent

[297] *United Irishman 22/10/1932*

livelihood. By taking its stand upon the principles enunciated in that Proclamation, the I.R.A. had accepted the responsibility for the task of putting an end to the present system of exploitation carried on in the interests of bankers, ranchers, and industrial capitalists. Gilmore described the recent revolt of the unemployed in Belfast as the most important political event in Ireland within the past ten years. He argued that it was more important than the overthrow of the Cosgrave Government because it had brought rival factions among the Belfast workers together in mutual hostility to their Imperial Capitalist exploiters. I.R.A. men and former B Specials had fought side by side against the capitalist government, and he suggested that it offered great hope for achieving the unity of Ireland when both North and South realised that a free Ireland must mean a free Workers' Republic.[298]

In early December 1932, the pro-Cumann na nGaedheal newspaper '*The United Irishman*' published a strongly worded commentary warning that the Irish Free State faced not merely economic difficulty, but a profound political and constitutional crisis. The paper asserted that public attention had been overly focused on economic hardship - falling farm incomes, rising unemployment, shortages of money, and commercial instability - while insufficient regard had been paid to what it described as an even greater danger: political disintegration and the threat of civil conflict. The paper argued that Ireland's difficulties were not part of a natural cycle of decline and recovery, but rather were deteriorating steadily. According to the commentary, national disaster could only be averted through extensive self-organisation, both electorally and in terms of physical and financial defence. It claimed that the Fianna Fáil government, whether by accident or design, had created conditions conducive to grave disorder, and that only firm leadership and strict discipline could prevent serious upheaval. '*The United Irishman*' further asserted that some supporters of Éamon de Valera had openly suggested that the fall of his government would lead not to a return of Cumann na nGaedheal, but to

[298] *An Phoblacht 29/10/1932*

the establishment of a Bolshevik government. While acknowledging that such claims were sometimes made rhetorically, the paper insisted that the danger was real. It pointed to the growth of illegal organisations, the increasing strength and armament of the IRA since early 1932, and what it characterised as openly Communist rhetoric in its own publications. The paper contended that these developments indicated a genuine threat to the authority of the State. The commentary argued that a Fianna Fáil victory had already led to economic confrontation with Great Britain, and that a Fianna Fáil defeat might provoke an armed challenge to the State by revolutionary forces. It maintained that the supposedly woeful political and economic direction of de Valera's policies risked recreating the conditions that had preceded the Civil War of 1922–23. According to the paper, even continued tolerance of constitutional Fianna Fáil rule would not avert disaster, as the government was allegedly steering the country towards what it described as Bolshevik domination. While '*The United Irishman*' stopped short of claiming that de Valera by any means deliberately sought to establish a communistic state, it nonetheless portrayed him as dangerously incompetent and accused his government of weakening the police, tolerating armed terrorism, and pursuing financial policies that may eventually lead to confiscatory taxation and inflation, creating the conditions amiable for armed takeover by what it perceived as discontented left-wing revolutionary groups, such as the IRA. These measures, the paper argued, would further undermine social order and economic stability. The article asserted that the expansion of state control over economic life was accelerating and that nationalisation and the erosion of individual liberty were becoming increasingly likely. It warned that, if such policies continued, popular resistance would eventually emerge, potentially in violent form. The paper therefore argued that the risk of confrontation should be faced sooner rather than later, by removing Fianna Fáil from office before the State became further weakened.

However, '*The United Irishman*' cautioned that this task required careful preparation and unity. It observed that while the majority of the population had come to believe that a

change of government and policy was necessary, fragmented and disorganised opposition would be ineffective. The paper called for a united national effort, urging opponents of Fianna Fáil to abandon internal rivalries and concentrate fully on defeating the government. In this context, the paper criticised what it described as pandering to the IRA and rejected attempts by political figures to condemn both Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal simultaneously. It portrayed Cumann na nGaedheal as the only party with the experience, organisational capacity, and resolve required to restore stability and oversee economic and political reconstruction. The commentary suggested that future political realignments in the Dáil could produce instability or violence unless guided by firm leadership and clear purpose. The article concluded by asserting that party differences of secondary importance should be subordinated to what it defined as the overriding national objective: halting Fianna Fáil's political course, countering revolutionary forces, and removing what '*The United Irishman*' repeatedly described as the looming menace of another civil war.[299]

At the end of December 1932, in a further commentary entitled "Towards Bolshevism", '*The United Irishman*' paper warned that Ireland was facing what it described as an imminent ideological and political threat. The paper asserted that this danger was not yet fully visible, as it remained concealed beneath what it characterised as patriotic rhetoric and various reformist or moral crusades. Nevertheless, it claimed that the underlying strength of the movement lay in the activism of a determined minority, whose influence was growing rapidly. According to the paper, permissiveness and complacency had allowed these ideas to take root and spread, and it argued that the speed of their expansion should alarm the public. It claimed that there was clear and indisputable evidence that political developments were moving in a specific direction. Despite public professions of "Christian Socialism" or "Republican" principles espoused by various organisations, the paper maintained that the inevitable outcome of their combined activities would be the

[299] *United Irishman 10/12/1932*

establishment of a Communist form of state, grounded in what it described as an explicitly Communist philosophy. '*The United Irishman*' questioned whether the Irish people would accept such a transformation passively and expressed confidence that they would not. However, it warned that coercion might be employed to enforce compliance if resistance emerged. The paper argued that confronting this perceived threat directly was therefore essential, and it identified this task as one of the principal objectives of the Army Comrades Association (A.C.A.) i.e., the 'Blueshirts.'

The commentary asserted that efforts by revolutionary forces to impose themselves on the Irish population represented a fundamental challenge to the nation's social and political order. It claimed that the most effective means of resisting such a development lay in the mobilisation of the rising generation. The paper emphasised that younger citizens bore a particular responsibility to engage actively in public life and to defend what it regarded as the existing constitutional and social framework. While presenting itself as a broad civic movement rather than an exclusive organisation, '*The United Irishman*' called upon young men from all backgrounds and occupations to assume responsibility for resisting revolutionary change. It noted with approval that many had already joined the Volunteer Division associated with the Blueshirt movement it supported, and it concluded by asserting that there was both capacity and need for many more to do so.[300]

In '*The IRA, 1926-1936*,' Professor Brian Hanley argues that the IRA's hostility to parliamentary democracy helps explain why wider European anti-democratic political currents found resonance within the organisation during the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to Hanley, communism was the most significant of these influences in this period. Between 1928 and 1932, communist ideas exercised a noticeable impact inside the IRA, and engagement with both Irish and international communists was not only permitted but, in some cases, encouraged by the leadership. Hanley notes that

[300] *United Irishman 31/12/1932*

members of the Army Council travelled to the Soviet Union with leadership approval, while prominent IRA figures publicly associated with Comintern-linked bodies such as the League against Imperialism in Ireland. During this phase, the Comintern effectively sidelined the Irish Communist Party, instead using Mick Fitzpatrick as its principal intermediary with Irish political movements. Hanley emphasises that openly communist membership of the IRA was broadly tolerated at this time, pointing out that nearly half of the Dublin-based Workers' Revolutionary Party also held IRA membership. Senior republicans were willing to deal with accusations of communist sympathies directly. Seán MacBride, for instance, argued that the survival of private capitalism inevitably entrenched social inequality. Moss Twomey went further, asserting that if communism meant overturning conquest, abolishing landlordism, and ending exploitation by a privileged elite, then figures such as Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, Lalor, Connolly, Pearse and Mellows must also be regarded as communists - along with the IRA itself. Hanley stresses the importance of the fact that Twomey would adopt a very different stance only two years later. By 1933, the Army Council formally prohibited communists from IRA membership, prompting many members to leave the organisation after that year's convention.

According to Hanley, the period between 1931 and 1933 marked a sharp shift in Ireland's political climate. While communism had never enjoyed widespread popularity, it only became the target of sustained and intense denunciation from 1931 onwards. The worsening economic crisis made radical responses appear plausible to sections of the population, evidenced by the election of two communist city councillors to Dublin Corporation in 1930. The involvement of some Fianna Fáil councillors in Comintern-affiliated organisations also provided a degree of political cover, helping explain why the IRA leadership felt able to launch Saor Éire, which Hanley describes as "emphatically socialist". As the largest revolutionary body in the state, and with several leaders already sympathetic to communist ideas, the IRA had proved receptive to communist rhetoric - particularly when framed in the language of republican

tradition. Hanley contends that figures such as Twomey, MacBride and Jim Killeen were not committed socialists in the conventional sense, but were open to radical policies that addressed social injustice and might revive a stagnating organisation.

Prof. Hanley also argues that the Catholic Church's fierce condemnation of Saor Éire forced the IRA leadership to reconsider its overt association with revolutionary socialism. They themselves recognised that a movement defined purely by cultural nationalism might have escaped clerical attack. More damaging, however, was the growing opposition to Saor Éire from within the IRA itself, which intensified as anti-communism became central to Irish political discourse in 1933. Hanley highlights early resistance from Belfast IRA units, which complained that '*An Phoblacht*' had become excessively "communistic" and questioned why Sinn Féin had not been adopted as the IRA's political vehicle instead. Following Fianna Fáil's 1932 election victory, the IRA nonetheless endorsed Saor Éire's principles while refraining from publicly reorganising it, with only a small number of officers supporting an open relaunch.

By 1933, Hanley notes, hostility within the IRA to communism, socialism and even political engagement more generally had become unmistakable. Numerous units proposed motions demanding a return to purely military activity and formal disassociation from communism. Delegates voiced fears that the IRA was perceived as anti-religious and that its social policies were deterring recruits. Former secretary of the Irish section of the Comintern, Seán MacSwiney (brother of the late Terence), now insisted that Christianity and communism were incompatible. Attempts by left-wing republicans to claim Liam Mellows as their ideological forebear were increasingly challenged, with Tom Barry reminding the convention that Mellows' ideas had been rejected by parts of the IRA in 1922. Hanley suggests that this internal climate influenced the IRA's decision not to intervene when Connolly House was attacked shortly after the convention. At Bodenstown in June 1933, Twomey publicly denied that communism formed part of IRA policy

and rejected any alliance with the Communist movement. '*An Phoblacht*' simultaneously published the order banning dual membership of the IRA and the Communist Party, distancing itself from the entity. Hanley stresses, however, that this did not represent a rejection of radicalism as such. Twomey argued that "communism" was being used as a smear against anyone who opposed prevailing social and economic arrangements, insisting that only those who profited from exploitation should defend the existing system. While this disappointed republicans on the left, Hanley observes that the broader atmosphere of hostility made even supporters of Republican Congress keen to distance themselves from communism. Twomey later acknowledged that Saor Éire had been imposed from above and lacked grassroots support, while clerical and political attacks had seriously undermined activist recruitment. After the 1933 convention, the IRA had effectively abandoned overtly communist programmes, and those with firm ideological commitments either reconsidered their views or departed.

Nonetheless, Prof. Hanley notes that elements of communist language continued to appear in IRA propaganda. Influenced by Comintern theories of capitalism's "Third Period" crisis, the IRA in 1934 characterised both Roosevelt's New Deal and Fianna Fáil's economic policies as fascist attempts to stabilise capitalism - an interpretation Hanley suggests was unusual outside international communism. Hanley cautions against assuming that all of the IRA's rank and file either understood or embraced these ideological positions. Some commanders claimed their men held only local or Fianna Fáil-influenced views, while others reported confusion over political statements issued by the leadership. Yet there were also indications of deeper questioning, with some leading figures noting that their men were asking what the struggle ultimately aimed to achieve. Notably, this was raised by J.J Sheehy (Co. Kerry), Herbert 'Seán' Mitchell (O/C, Cork Brigade), and Tom Maguire (Co. Westmeath) asking, "what are we fighting for - is it just to put up another flag?"

Reports from Leitrim in 1933 described members as reluctant to express opinions without prompting. Overall, Hanley

concludes that the leadership was consistently more radical than junior officers and ordinary volunteers, shaping both the limits of policy promotion and reactions to controversies such as the Gralton deportation. While Twomey personally supported Gralton, local IRA units in Leitrim refused to do so and may even have been involved in violence against him. Hanley notes that similar pressures forced the pragmatic Irish Labour Party to abandon its commitment to the "Workers' Republic" during the decade. After 1933, the IRA continued to advance radical economic ideas, though Hanley argues these reflected the thinking of Twomey, MacBride and O'Donoghue rather than more aggressively left-wing figures such as O'Donnell or Gilmore. These views were set out in the 'Constitution of Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland,' a revised version of the constitution adopted in 1931. In response to internal suspicion of communism, amendments explicitly rejected irreligion. Hanley characterises the document as deeply radical: it proposed decentralised local government, free education, minimum wages, unemployment benefits, limits on private property, land redistribution, state housing, nationalised transport, regulated industry, co-operative distribution and state control of banking and credit. He notes that this programme lay well to the left of anything advocated by the Labour Party at the time.

While influenced by Pearse's 'communalist' ideas, Hanley points out that the programme avoided open calls for class struggle. He identifies additional influences, including Catholic Distributism and Social Credit theory, both of which condemned capitalism while allowing limited private property and claiming Christian foundations. The IRA increasingly framed capitalism as "pagan and unchristian", with Twomey identifying banking as the core of imperial power. His proposals combined land reform, industrial development, cheap food for urban workers and state control of credit - policies that allowed radical critique without explicit socialist alignment in an increasingly anti-communist society, a shift led by the senior clergymen. Finally, Hanley rejects the notion that the IRA's politics were disconnected from social reality. He argues that the programme reflected

both leadership ideology and the concerns of the small farmers and lower-middle-class officers who dominated the organisation outside Dublin. Communications from the west of Ireland reveal genuine grievances over economic exploitation, land use and unemployment. The IRA sought to channel this discontent while avoiding direct confrontation with Fianna Fáil. However, Hanley notes that even these moderated policies faced criticism from militarists who continued to view the leadership as "too communistic". Since political initiatives were imposed from above, the rank and file had little input, and accusations of communist sympathy would continue to haunt republican movements well into the following decades.[301]

As reported by '*An Phoblacht*' in January 1933, the Irish Republican Army (styling itself as 'Óglaigh na hÉireann') issued a formal pronouncement following a General Convention composed of elected delegates from volunteer units throughout the thirty-two counties. Addressed explicitly to "the Irish People", the document represented an authoritative statement of policy by the IRA leadership at a moment of political transition, on the eve of a general election in the Twenty-Six Counties. It sought both to restate the organisation's ideological foundations and to justify a significant tactical intervention in parliamentary politics.

The manifesto reaffirmed the IRA's self-conception as the armed embodiment of Irish national sovereignty and as the legitimate inheritor of the Irish Republic proclaimed in 1916. It described the organisation as a section of Irish manhood organised throughout the country to assert, by force if necessary, the inalienable right of the nation to freedom and self-determination. Sovereignty was presented as residing neither in treaties nor in electoral institutions, but in the people themselves, with the IRA serving as their weapon rather than as an autonomous authority.

The document also offered a clear interpretation of the revolutionary decade and its aftermath. The defeat of the

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[301] *Hanley, B (2002). 'The IRA, 1926-1936.' Four Courts Press.*

Republican forces in the Civil War of 1922–23 was acknowledged as a severe but temporary reverse, attributed to British power and the intervention of an "alien garrison". The subsequent Cumann na nGaedheal administration was depicted as a regime aligned with British interests, ruling through coercive legislation and repression. The electoral defeat of that government in 1932 was portrayed as a major national achievement, removing the immediate danger of renewed civil conflict and displacing from office a party accused of loyalty to the British Empire.

Perhaps one of the most consequential elements of the pronouncement was the Convention's decision to release the organisation from its previous restriction on electoral participation. The IRA leadership openly called on its members and sympathisers to work and vote against Cumann na nGaedheal candidates and their allies, and in practical terms to assist Fianna Fáil into office once again. This marked a notable shift in tactics, reflecting a willingness to intervene directly in constitutional politics while maintaining the organisation's revolutionary self-identity. At the same time, the manifesto took considerable care to emphasise that this support for Fianna Fáil was neither ideological nor unconditional. The party was criticised for its weakness in the face of its opponents, for its enforcement of coercive legislation, and for its failure to release imprisoned IRA members, despite earlier electoral promises. Fianna Fáil's efforts to stabilise the existing economic system were condemned as insufficient and as perpetuating social injustice. The IRA thus framed its support as purely instrumental: Fianna Fáil was to be backed not because it embodied their version of republican ideals, but because its return to office would prevent the restoration of a government viewed as openly pro-Westminster.

The IRA document also rejected Fianna Fáil's claims to constitutional legitimacy. The party was accused of asserting a legitimacy it had previously denied to its predecessors, while continuing to operate within the structures of the Free State. The manifesto insisted that no Twenty-Six County government could be considered legitimate so long as

partition endured and the Treaty remained in force. The continued imprisonment of IRA members was cited as evidence that the new administration differed less in practice from its predecessor than it claimed.

Beyond immediate electoral considerations, the manifesto articulated a broad republican programme encompassing national, political, and social demands. It called for the scrapping of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the abolition of partition, and complete severance from the British Empire. The Oath of Allegiance was to be abolished, and the representative of the British Crown was to cease to be recognised or permitted in Ireland. Compensation to former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and other British servants was rejected, as was the payment of land annuities, which the IRA repudiated on the grounds of popular sovereignty over the nation's soil.

The economic vision advanced in the document was notably radical. While supporting the exclusion of British goods, the IRA rejected any policy that would merely enrich a domestic manufacturing elite. Instead, it advocated the public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the separation of Ireland's financial system from Britain in a manner that would empower the people rather than Irish bankers. This placed the organisation firmly within a left-republican tradition that combined national liberation with social transformation.

The manifesto concluded by making clear that electoral support for Fianna Fáil did not imply acceptance of negotiation on issues deemed fundamental to national freedom. Unity, independence, and freedom from foreign domination were described as non-negotiable rights rather than matters for diplomatic compromise. The Irish people were strategically urged to return Fianna Fáil to office, while simultaneously insisting on freedom for separatist republican organisations, the release of IRA prisoners - and the preparation for a future united Irish Republic in which the

IRA would serve as the servant of the people, rather than as a governing authority.[302]

In June 1933, an article by '*An Phoblacht*' set out the IRA Army Council's conception of public ownership as a system that still recognised individual rights, while subordinating economic power to the common good. Rather than rejecting private property outright, it affirmed the individual's right to personal and private property, provided such ownership did not conflict with or damage the welfare of the wider community. In doing so, it distinguished sharply between personal property and the ownership of strategic national resources. Central to the article was the assertion that the soil of the nation and its natural resources belonged collectively to the people. These resources were presented not as commodities to be exploited for private gain, but as national assets whose use should serve social and economic development. This outlook had reflected a distributist or socialist republican understanding of sovereignty that extended beyond political independence to include control over land, wealth, and productive capacity. The article placed particular emphasis on agriculture as the foundation of national prosperity. It advocated the rapid promotion of co-operative organisation within the agricultural industry, arguing that such structures would enable the wealth and credit of the state to be directed towards productive development rather than private profit. Through co-operation, agriculture was envisaged as a means of raising living standards across the community rather than enriching a narrow class. Co-operation was also presented as a means of rational economic planning. By coordinating agricultural co-operatives with distributing and marketing bodies, the system was intended to regulate production, manage internal food distribution, and ensure that national surpluses were marketed in the collective interest. This approach contrasted with laissez-faire capitalism, which the article implicitly associated with waste, inequality, and instability. Importantly, the article stressed that participation in agricultural co-operatives was to be voluntary rather than compulsory. This

[302] *An Phoblacht 14/1/1933*

insistence reflected an attempt to reconcile collective organisation with personal freedom, avoiding the charge of coercion. However, the text also made clear that those who chose to remain outside the co-operative system could not expect to benefit automatically from state credit or facilities. Economic solidarity, in this view, carried reciprocal obligations. The treatment of labour further underscored the article's social ethic. Individuals operating outside the co-operative framework were required to provide hired workers with conditions equal to those maintained within co-operative enterprises. This provision aimed to prevent the undercutting of labour standards and reinforced the principle that economic activity should be governed by social responsibility rather than profit maximisation. Overall, the article articulated a vision of public ownership rooted in socialist republican principles. It advanced a model in which national resources, credit, and key industries were controlled in the collective interest, while individual initiative was preserved within defined social limits. Public ownership, as presented by the IRA Army Council, was not an abstract ideal but a practical framework for economic justice, national self-sufficiency, and the improvement of living standards for the Irish people.[303]

In a September 1933 address to members, a CnaB organiser and contributor to '*An Phoblacht*' outlined three key points which, she stressed, were essential for the movement's progress. First, was the importance of taking advantage of the present moment to perfect the machinery of the organisation. For this purpose, the preparation of timetables and monthly reports to General Headquarters (GHQ) was recommended. Second was the need for members to study economics. The paper reported that she emphasised how essential it was to understand, and be able to explain to others, that Ireland required a new social system tailored to its needs. The existing system, founded on capitalism, was described - as Connolly had once said - as "the most foreign thing in Ireland." Third, was the role of Cumann na mBán in challenging ignorance in the Six Counties. According to the

[303] *An Phoblacht 17/6/1933*

speaker, a strong organisation in the South could help to break down barriers erected by "Imperialist-Capitalist bosses" in the North, where printed matter, even American papers containing Republican news or teaching, was banned. She argued that the stronger Cumann na mBán became in the South, the better placed the Executive would be to extend organisation in the Six Counties. Through members there, Republican teaching could be spread by post and word of mouth, and Orangemen could be reassured that, in a free Republic, they would share in guarantees of religious liberty, equal rights, and opportunities for all citizens.[304]

In December 1933, a Cumann na mBán column in '*An Phoblacht*' outlined that Liam Mellows was distinct among Ireland's martyrs in that his aim was not merely to sever the connection with England and establish a native government, assuming that social transformation would automatically follow. While imprisoned in Mountjoy shortly before his execution, Mellows reflected deeply on the meaning of freedom, noting that "we are thinking hard here, though the place and atmosphere are not conducive to thought." He emphasised that the social programme outlined in the 1916 Declaration of Independence needed to be translated into concrete policies. Although he left detailed planning to those "outside" prison, he provided a broad vision of what he considered a correct interpretation of the Proclamation. Regarding economic organisation under a Republican government, Mellows wrote that all industry would be controlled by the state for the benefit of workers and farmers. He argued that this clarification remained urgently relevant, given that by 1933, the Fianna Fáil government - composed of men who had claimed to share Mellows' ideals in 1922 - organised industry largely to benefit British or Irish capitalists. The government celebrated new factories established under private ownership, including foreign firms beginning cement production, despite Mellows' insistence that vital resources should serve the nation rather than private profit. Mellows extended this vision to transport, banking, and land, advocating state control of railways, canals, and

[304] *An Phoblacht 23/9/1933*

other infrastructure to serve industry and agriculture rather than profit, and the redistribution of aristocratic land to those capable of operating it for the nation's benefit. By 1933, eleven years after Mellows' death, many symbolic changes had taken place: pillar boxes had turned from red to green, uniforms from khaki to green, coins had changed, and Ireland had become the Free State, later the Republic. Yet the economic and social conditions of the population had changed little, and British and Irish elites - ranchers, industrialists, and bankers - remained dominant.

The article concluded that the Fianna Fáil government had failed to understand the freedom for which Mellows had fought and died. Its administration preserved existing conditions and vested interests, maintaining private ownership of the means of existence and perpetuating the inequalities of capitalism. The authors argued that the Irish people had themselves contributed to this situation by placing trust in leaders who neither understood nor adhered to Mellows' policies. The lesson, they asserted, was the necessity of defining clearly the type of freedom sought: one that would reorganise production for social use rather than profit and end the exploitation of man by man. The article urged readers, reflecting on Mellows' sacrifice, to commit to completing his work and building the foundations of the Republic he had envisioned.[305]

A feature article in '*United Ireland*,' written by Professor James Hogan and published in January 1934, forms part of a sustained campaign in the Irish press warning against the growing influence of communist ideology within Irish republicanism, particularly the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.). It reflects the intense ideological anxieties of early 1930s Ireland, where cultural nationalism, Catholicism, and revolutionary socialism intersected in volatile and often contradictory ways. The primary purpose of the article is polemical. Hogan seeks not merely to report events but to apparently expose, condemn, and warn. His tone is urgent, moralistic, and uncompromising. The article is addressed to a

[305] *An Phoblacht 9/12/1933*

readership assumed to be Catholic, culturally nationalist, and anti-communist, and it repeatedly frames communism as an existential threat to Irish religious and national identity. Hogan presents himself as documenting facts drawn from public meetings, newspapers, and official statements, but these are consistently interpreted through a strongly ideological lens. The article is structured as a cumulative indictment, building the case that Irish republicanism - particularly the I.R.A. - was controlled by Marxist thought. He referred to how the I.R.A. leaders had referred to the establishment of a "Workers' Paradise."

A central focus of the article is the Friends of Soviet Russia (F.O.S.R.), an organisation portrayed as the principal conduit through which communist ideas entered Irish political life. Hogan recounts how F.O.S.R. delegations returned from the Soviet Union in 1930 and subsequently organised lectures and meetings in Ireland, presenting the USSR as a workers' paradise. Particular attention is given to speeches by prominent Irish activists, including Sighle Dowling, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, and Helena Molony, who are quoted or paraphrased as claiming that the Soviet system embodied a form of "practical Christianity" despite its rejection of organised religion. Hogan treats these claims with open incredulity, arguing that they amount to a deliberate deception of Catholic audiences.

One of the article's most significant themes is the relationship between religion and politics. Hogan argues that Soviet-style communism is inherently atheistic and therefore irreconcilable with Irish Catholic identity. He rejects outright the notion that Soviet society could represent any form of Christianity, practical or otherwise. This section of the article is particularly revealing of contemporary Catholic discourse. Hogan insists that Christianity cannot exist without belief in Christ, prayer, and the sacraments, and he portrays Soviet humanitarianism as a hollow substitute for genuine religion. In doing so, he situates the ideological struggle not merely as political but as spiritual and civilisational.

The article next turns to Sinn Féin, which Hogan portrays as ideologically confused and increasingly susceptible to communist influence. He suggests that traditional republican devotion to "faith and fatherland" has been undermined by the adoption of class-based revolutionary politics. This confusion, Hogan argues, has left many republicans unable to decide between Catholicism and communism - presented as mutually exclusive world-views.

Hogan recounts several attempts by I.R.A. linked delegations to travel to the Soviet Union, noting that the Irish State government denied passports to most applicants. These refusals are presented as prudent acts of state protection against subversive influence. He describes how protest meetings were held in response, and how returning delegates published enthusiastic accounts of Soviet life in republican newspapers. These episodes are used to demonstrate the persistence and organisation of communist advocacy in Ireland. A substantial portion of the article is devoted to Michael Fitzpatrick, portrayed as a key figure linking the I.R.A., the F.O.S.R., and Soviet contacts. Hogan traces Fitzpatrick's involvement back to the late 1920s and presents him as emblematic of a broader revolutionary network operating under the guise of nationalism. By naming individuals and organisations, Prof. Hogan reinforces the impression of a coherent, coordinated movement, rather than isolated ideological flirtations.

The article places particular emphasis on developments in Northern Ireland, where the I.R.A. and F.O.S.R. cooperated during the Six-County elections. Hogan argues that the I.R.A.'s turn towards working-class revolutionary rhetoric represented a deliberate attempt to transcend sectarian divisions between Catholics and Protestants. He views this strategy with deep suspicion, portraying it as a Marxist tactic designed to dissolve religious identity in favour of class allegiance. The I.R.A.'s 1932 manifesto to members of the Orange Order is cited as evidence of this shift.

One of Hogan's central claims is that a de facto alliance had emerged between the I.R.A. and communist organisations.

He notes that the same activists appeared across a wide range of movements - the anti-imperialist leagues, farmers' movements, republican commemorations, and communist gatherings. This convergence is described metaphorically as "new oil" poured into the old lamp of Irish nationalism, suggesting that Marxism had re-energised republicanism while fundamentally altering its nature.

Hogan expresses particular concern over Cumann na mBan, the republican women's organisation. While acknowledging that it once rejected Soviet communism, he claims that its leadership had since adopted policies tantamount to communism, especially through support for the abolition of private property. This section reflects contemporary anxieties about women's political activism and the perceived radicalisation of previously nationalist organisations.

In its concluding section, the article makes its starkest claim: that I.R.A.-style Communism is more dangerous than open, official communism. Hogan argues that while the Communist Party of Ireland is relatively small and transparent, the I.R.A.'s revolutionary communism is cloaked in cultural nationalism and therefore more likely to mislead and mobilise the public. The article ends with a striking comparison, suggesting that even disciplined Soviet-style communism would be preferable to what Hogan characterises as the chaotic, anti-clerical, and destabilising outcome of an I.R.A.-led revolution in Ireland.

As a historical source, the article is valuable not for its objectivity, but for what it reveals about elite-Catholic institutional fears in 1930s Ireland. It illustrates the extent to which communism was perceived as a moral and spiritual threat, not merely a political one, and how deeply contested the issue of Irish Republicanism had become in the aftermath of the civil war.[306]

In an article attacking Republican literature published by '*United Ireland*' in February 1934, Professor James Hogan

[306] *United Ireland 27/1/1934*

opined that it was no longer necessary to wade through blasphemous productions to establish that the Communists were persecuting religion in Russia, just as they had always done wherever they had had the opportunity - as they had done in Paris under the Commune, and as they were then doing in Mexico, China, and Spain. He argued that it would be quite sufficient to read the concluding chapters of the latest work on the subject, "Religion and Communism," by J. F. Hecker. Professor Hogan noted that not even the most sceptical or addle-headed friend of the Soviet Union could dismiss the book as a tainted source, since its author was an American atheist and a Communist who had been in the service of the Socialists for the past nine years. He pointed out that Hecker had therefore enjoyed unrivalled opportunities for studying the situation at first hand, and that it was unlikely he had presented the facts with the objectivity and calmness worthy of a better cause. Professor Hogan concluded that the "Christian Communists" of the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin might have profited by reading this book straight from Moscow, which, for its value as a literary antidote to figures such as Mr. Murray and Mr. O'Donnell, ought to have been placed on the shelves of the public libraries.[307]

A report in '*An Phoblacht*' from March 1934 detailed how George Gilmore delivered a lecture under the Irish National Union of Woodworkers' Educational Committee, explaining how Fianna Fáil had come to power and why Ireland's political and economic system could not last as it was. He argued that the capitalist system had failed to provide decent livelihoods for workers and that over-production and unemployment had created instability worldwide, including in Ireland. Two-thirds of the world's productive capacity was idle, and capitalism was breaking down. Gilmore said that Ireland faced a choice: either it would fall under fascist tyranny or move into a new age of freedom for workers and national independence. The future, he claimed, depended on whether the working classes and their allies in the countryside were strong and united enough to challenge the privileged classes. He identified the Imperialist party -

[307] *United Ireland 10/2/1934*

composed of landlords, wealthy traders, and foreign investors - as the main opposition to progress. These interests, now re-organised from the old "Cosgrave Party," sought to maintain control through dictatorship and represented the "Fascist menace."

At that time, Irish capitalism, allegedly preserved by Fianna Fáil, was struggling to gain independence from British control, to protect home industries, and to resist British dumping. The Trade Union Movement, Gilmore noted, had aligned itself with Fianna Fáil because it saw a chance for growth and mild anti-imperialism. However, he believed this support was shallow. Gilmore observed that people across Ireland and the world were restless and uncertain about the future. He said that whatever government held power could not expect strong loyalty from workers whose lives remained insecure and whose trust in leadership was weak. Although Fianna Fáil claimed to defend democracy, Gilmore argued that it merely administered capitalist democracy - a limited system that confined itself to managing unemployment and over-production, rather than changing the structure of society. He said that Fianna Fáil's version of democracy resembled life in an internment camp, where freedom existed only within narrow limits. The real danger, he continued, came from the Imperialists and Fascists who were trying to regain power by exploiting this instability. They could not win popular support, so they aimed to seize control through dictatorship, abolish Parliament, crush the trade unions, and destroy local councils. Gilmore insisted that the struggle against fascism had to go beyond defending Irish capitalism. It needed to be a revolutionary movement led by the working class, fighting for freedom not just from Imperialism but from Irish capitalism itself. Only through a working-class revolution could real change be achieved. He warned that fascism could not be defeated by defensive measures; it had to be overthrown through a determined, united fight against the capitalist system. The small farmers, the workers, and all oppressed groups had to act quickly and decisively before the enemy could regroup. Referring to history, Gilmore reminded his audience of the 1913 Lockout, when the Irish working-class had formed the Citizens' Army after allegedly

being betrayed by national leaders. He compared that period of struggle to the current political climate and predicted that the next great fight would again centre on the working class and its leadership. He added that if the Irish people failed to act, fascism and imperialism would triumph. But if they united under a revolutionary workers' movement, they could overthrow both systems and win true independence and social justice. Gilmore continued his lecture by reflecting on how the Republican and Labour movements had allegedly lost their original revolutionary spirit. Labour leaders, he said, had surrendered their independence and fallen behind Griffith and Sinn Féin during the formation of trade unions. When Griffith agreed to compromise with Britain, Labour's leadership failed, revealing its lack of true anti-imperialist principles. This, Gilmore said, marked the first tragedy of the trade union movement's disconnection from the national struggle. Imperialists exploited that weakness to manipulate public opinion again. He said that while Fianna Fáil had condemned Imperialism in theory, it chose to defend its own capitalist interests rather than side with more radical groups like Saor Éire. As Irish capitalism gained strength, Fianna Fáil rose to power with support from working-class and Republican voters. Sinn Féin largely followed Fianna Fáil's lead, while Saor Éire became silent and hesitant, paralysed by inaction and guilt. Gilmore concluded that unless the working-class members of the I.R.A. genuinely reflected the will of the workers, they would be overcome by corruption and stagnation. True unity, he argued, could only be forged through shared struggle and sacrifice. He called for comradeship between workers and nationalists against the fascist threat, using past uprisings like the one in Drogheda as examples of the solidarity needed. The future of Irish freedom, he said, depended on merging the socialist and nationalist causes within the trade unions and revolutionary movements - because only that unity could finally achieve both social and national liberation.

In the same edition of the paper, a contributor wrote that Irish Republicans needed to unite their resources into an organised movement against Imperialist strongholds like the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Masonic Halls. He argued

that intellectual organisation was essential; otherwise, the I.R.A. would continue to suffer setbacks. He what he referred to as criticised corrupt solicitors and businessmen who profited from exploitation and injustice, calling for a movement strong enough to expel them from Ireland. He also reported that only three Catholics sat on the Dublin Chamber of Commerce's Council, and that, although Fianna Fáil ministers had recently addressed the chamber seeking co-operation, members allegedly mocked them after the meeting by drawing caricatures of Éamon de Valera and making fun of their statements.

Another guest contributor to the paper argued that over-throwing the bankers' power could have been done peacefully, since they were only a small group whose influence depended on dividing the workers and capitalists. He claimed that Communists and Socialists had failed to expose bankers properly, instead fuelling pointless "class-wars." He pointed out that bankers still lent vast sums to the Soviet Union despite previous financial losses in Tsarist Russia, suggesting they had little real fear of Communism. He mocked socialism for collapsing in Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, and Hungary when faced up against fascism, saying that vague socialist proposals only united the industrial middle classes and bankers against them. In contrast, he praised "Social Credit" monetary theory for supposedly aligning the workers and producers together against financial elites. However, the editor of '*An Phoblacht*' responded that Ireland could easily create a fairer money system under a republic once it removed control from private banks. Such a system, they wrote, should be based on real goods and wealth rather than gold or speculation. Its goal would be to enable both production and consumption. They criticised the "Social Credit" ideas of the National Dividend and Price Rebate for leaving industrial ownership unchanged. These proposals, they argued, would benefit manufacturers and distributors but not reduce inequality. The editor added that even if Douglas's Social Credit scheme worked, it would only produce a slightly improved version of the same capitalist order - where a few held vast wealth while others remained poor. Both industrialists and

financiers, they claimed, shared an interest in preserving the system, because it allowed them to exploit workers. If they supported "Social Credit," it was only because it posed no real threat to their profits.[308]

A feature article in a '*United Ireland*' editorial series by Professor James Hogan from April 1934 analysing the Constitution adopted by the Irish Republican Army in 1933. Prof. Hogan displays explicit right-wing sympathies on economic matters. Prof. Hogan's central contention was unequivocal: the I.R.A., whatever its cultural nationalist credentials, had become deeply implicated in socialist - and ultimately, communist - ideology, and its proposed constitutional order closely resembled the economic and social structures then being imposed in Soviet Russia. His article is significant not only for its conclusions, but for the methodical way in which it traces perceived Soviet influence across agriculture, industry, finance, and the conception of the State itself.

Hogan begins his analysis with agriculture, which he treats as the decisive test of the I.R.A.'s social outlook. He opens by defining collective farming in terms that deliberately echo contemporary descriptions of the Soviet kolkhoz system:

> *"Collective farming is a system of agriculture under which anything from twenty to a hundred or more farms… are thrown together and worked in common. The farmer ceases to be his own master."*

From the outset, Hogan insists that collectivisation entails not merely cooperation, but the abolition of the independent farmer as an economic and moral agent. Once incorporated into the collective, the farmer becomes, in Hogan's words, "the servant-man of the State," differing from the industrial worker only in the setting of his labour. This framing prepares the ground for Hogan's most persistent accusation: that the I.R.A.'s repeated use of the term "co-operative" is deliberately misleading. While acknowledging the respected

[308] *An Phoblacht 3/3/1934*

tradition of agricultural co-operation in Ireland and abroad, he warns readers:

> *"Let us not be duped by the use of the term 'co-operative' in the present instance."*

According to Professor Hogan, the I.R.A.'s "co-operative communities" are not voluntary associations of independent producers, but collectivised units operating under State direction. He makes this explicit by linking them directly to Soviet precedent:

> *"They are really nothing else than 'collectives' of the type established in rural Russia since 1929."*

The date is crucial. By invoking 1929–30, Hogan anchors his argument in the period of Stalin's forced collectivisation, already widely associated in European discourse with coercion, expropriation, and famine. This is not a casual comparison, but a calculated historical parallel. Hogan's most memorable formulation captures this alleged deception with biting irony:

> *"It was a rather ingenious idea to borrow Sir Horace Plunkett's cloak for Stalin."*

Here, the benign legacy of Irish co-operation is contrasted with the alleged brutality of Soviet agrarian policy, reinforcing Hogan's claim that familiar language is being used to conceal an allegedly foreign and dangerous system.

For Hogan, the defining feature of communism is not simply revolutionary rhetoric, but State control over production. He argues that once the State determines acreage, crops, labour allocation, and credit, the survival of private farming becomes impossible:

> *"There can be no place for privately owned or even privately worked farms in a system where not only marketing and distribution, but also production is centralised in the State."*

He insists that under such conditions, individual farms would be tolerated only temporarily and only at a disadvantage. To illustrate this, he employs a vivid metaphor:

> *"A privately owned and worked farm would have about as much chance of surviving in a 'co-operative community' as a Red Indian wigwam in the middle of Broadway."*

The comparison underscores his belief that the disappearance of private farming is not accidental, but structurally inevitable.

One of Hogan's most detailed arguments concerns the I.R.A.'s apparent assurance that farmers would not be compelled to join collectivised structures. He dismisses this as a transitional tactic, directly comparable to early Soviet policy:

> *"Somehow these words have a familiar ring. In 1930 the farmers of Russia who were holding back from the collectives heard much the same story."*

To reinforce this claim, Hogan quotes Peadar O'Donnell, a prominent left-wing republican, who argued that reluctant farmers would eventually join collectivised systems once their advantages became clear:

> *"He will stay out until he sees that a safer, surer, better condition of living is waiting for him inside the collectives… inevitably the crossover takes place*."

For Hogan, this language mirrors Soviet justifications for gradual collectivisation and exposes what he sees as the illusory nature of voluntarism. Economic pressure, denial of credit, and exclusion from State support would, he argues, force compliance without the need for immediate coercion.

Hogan strengthens his case by aligning I.R.A. policy with that of the Communist Party of Ireland. Citing the writings of

Brian O'Neill, he highlights striking similarities in language regarding land, production, and the conditional toleration of smallholders:

> *"So the I.R.A. and the Communist Party of Ireland speak, for all practical purposes, with the same voice."*

This assertion is central to Professor Hogan's thesis. While organisational distinctions remained, he argues that ideological convergence was already complete. In his view, the I.R.A. had absorbed communist assumptions about property, class, and historical inevitability, even if it avoided explicit revolutionary terminology.

When turning from agriculture to industry and transport, Hogan notes that the I.R.A. programme becomes less guarded and more explicit. He quotes directly from the Constitution:

> "*Industry so created shall be the property of the community*," and -
>
> "*Workers in those industries shall be responsible for their operation, under State control and management, and they shall be remunerated on a wage basis*."

Here, Hogan argues, there is no attempt at concealment. The programme amounts to State ownership, wage labour, and central coordination, which he describes as being "modelled exactly on that which is in process of being established in the Soviet Union." Private industry, though not formally abolished, would be rendered economically untenable:

> "*They will be the unwanted and illegitimate children of the I.R.A. Republic*."

Hogan repeatedly stresses that State Socialism cannot remain stable. In his formulation, it inevitably collapses into full Communism once resistance emerges:

> *"State Socialism will pass over to Communism, for Communism is simply State Socialism on a basis of class warfare."*

This reflects a broader conservative, anti-communist strand of Catholic worldview, in which any system subordinating economic life entirely to the State must ultimately rely on coercion. Professor Hogan predicts that, if the I.R.A. ever achieved power, it would eventually confront farmers and entrepreneurs with the same ultimatum issued in Soviet Russia:

> *"You must now either join the collectives or take the consequences of your counter-revolutionary prejudices against Socialism."*

Beyond economics, Hogan situates the I.R.A.'s programme within a moral critique of "State idolatry." He describes this as "the most dangerous form of paganism," in which the State becomes a law unto itself, unconstrained by moral limits or human dignity. Ultra-cultural nationalism and socialism, he argues, converge in the totalitarian State, a model he believed the I.R.A. was implicitly embracing.

In sum, Prof. Hogan's article presents the I.R.A. Constitution as a coherent, if partially disguised, blueprint for a socialist republic moving inexorably toward complete Communism. By systematically comparing I.R.A. proposals with Soviet practice, quoting republican and communist figures side by side, and framing collectivisation as structurally coercive, The right-wing Hogan sought to convince his readers that Irish republicanism had crossed a decisive ideological threshold.[309]

A front page feature of '*An Phoblacht*' from May 1934 shows that at an IRA rally in Drogheda, it was reported that Liam MaC Gabhann addressed the public regarding Mr. Eoin O'Duffy's pending visit to the town. He reminded people

[309] *United Ireland 14/4/1934*

that, although the Irish Republican Army sought to avoid clashes with “imperialist" forces, Free State troops would seize any opportunity to arrest members of the (Irish Republican) Army. Mac Gabhann urged the citizens of Drogheda to give O’Duffy a symbolic response: a town in mourning, with closed doors and drawn blinds, and homes and public buildings decorated with black flags, noting that O’Duffy would have preferred a forceful presence to such quiet defiance. He criticised Fianna Fáil, asserting that while some claimed the party had failed, it was in fact succeeding - carrying out the policies outlined by England in the Treaty. He argued that Fianna Fáil represented the factory owners, subsidised ranchers while working farmers laboured abroad, and provided relief only to prevent the rise of genuine, independent workers. Meanwhile, Michael O’Ceallaigh contrasted the Irish Republican Army’s policy with that of Fianna Fáil, noting that the suppression of ‘*An Phoblacht*’ aimed to prevent the public from understanding the Republican agenda. He maintained that the authorities feared the people would learn more than mere sentimental nationalism, resulting in the imprisonment of Republican activists and the suppression of Republican publications. Nevertheless, he argued that the IRA’s plans would come to fruition. He asserted that any future uprising must succeed and that the government formed thereafter should be a government of workers for workers. The speakers were greeted with enthusiasm, and cheers were raised for Republican prisoners as the meeting concluded. A grand procession followed, with disciplined lines of Cumann na mBan and Fianna members marching to the music of the Drogheda and Dublin bands, presenting a stirring sight through the town that Sunday evening.[310]

In June 1934, a revealing insight into the ideological tensions within Irish republicanism and nationalism in the early 1930s is provided by a public letter written by Prof. James Hogan (a former National Army officer) and published in the ‘*Irish Press*.’ The letter formed part of a sustained exchange between Hogan and Mary MacSwiney, a prominent

[310] *An Phoblacht 26/5/1934*

republican activist, following the publication of Hogan's book '*Could Ireland Become Communist*?' At issue was Hogan's contention that communist ideology had become deeply embedded within Irish Republican organisations, particularly the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), and that this development posed a fundamental challenge to Catholic and democratic conceptions of Irish cultural nationalism.

Hogan's letter is framed as a defence of factual accuracy rather than ideology. He argues that MacSwiney had effectively conceded the central points on which his critique rested: namely, that she had authored a letter protesting the spread of communism within the republican movement, that this letter had been read at a meeting of the Friends of Soviet Russia (F.O.S.R.), and that she had presided at a public meeting addressed by Peadar O'Donnell. For Hogan, these admissions confirmed his claim that republican and pro-Soviet circles were no longer distinct but overlapped in personnel, rhetoric, and purpose. A key element of Hogan's argument concerns Peadar O'Donnell, whom he presents as a consistent advocate of Marxist ideas irrespective of the forum in which he spoke. Rejecting MacSwiney's attempt to distinguish between O'Donnell's activities under Sinn Féin or '*An Phoblacht*' auspices and those associated with more explicitly left-wing platforms, Hogan insists that such distinctions were essentially meaningless. In his view, Peadar O'Donnell's political message remained fundamentally the same across all contexts, reflecting a broader pattern in which revolutionary republicanism absorbed and transmitted communist ideology while retaining nationalist language.

The letter also reveals the intensely personal nature of ideological debate within inter-war republicanism. Hogan devotes considerable space to rebutting what he characterises as misrepresentations of his work, denying that he had labelled figures such as Liam Mellows as communists or falsely attributed positions to Cumann na mBan. He presents these disputes as attempts to undermine his credibility rather than to engage substantively with his evidence. In doing so, Hogan portrays himself as a documentary historian, emphasising that the bulk of his material was drawn from

pamphlets, speeches, and publications produced by the movements under examination.

More broadly, Hogan challenges what he perceives as an emerging reluctance within republican circles to tolerate criticism of the I.R.A. He argues that revolutionary and communist sentiment had come to operate as a protective screen, shielding the organisation from scrutiny while enabling the gradual integration of Marxist ideas into its programme. This concern is expressed not only in political terms but also in moral language, as Hogan frames the debate as one involving Christian ethics, democratic legitimacy, and respect for the authority of a government elected under universal suffrage.

As a historical source, the letter is significant less for the accuracy of its conclusions than for what it reveals about the ideological climate of 1930s Ireland. It illustrates the depth of suspicion with which left-republican thought was viewed by Catholic nationalist commentators and highlights the extent to which communism was understood not merely as an economic doctrine but as a moral and spiritual threat. The exchange between Hogan and MacSwiney thus exemplifies the broader struggle to define the meaning of Irish republicanism in the decades following the initial struggle, at a time when its relationship to socialism, religion, and democracy remained profoundly contested.[311]

On 14 July 1934, the '*Republican Congress*' paper hit out at the '*Catholic Mind*' newspaper, in which an article of the Catholic periodical advocated for a 'National Government' composed of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour together to crush "the socialistic IRA and the Communists of its left wing." The '*Republican Congress*' denounced the proposals of the '*Catholic Mind*.'[312]

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[311] *Irish Press 4/6/1934*

[312] *Republican Congress 14/7/1934*

An issue of '*An Phoblacht*' from 21 July 1934 (cited in an earlier chapter) highlights the themes that dominated the IRA's social agenda. In it, it quotes the 'IRA Plan' as containing the following:

> *"The State shall establish a monopoly in banking, and in the creation and issuing of credit and currency, so that the wealth and credit of the Nation shall be made available for the benefit of the community."*

Above this, '*An Phoblacht*' in an article reprinted and reflected upon a piece from the '*Irish Review*' (Melbourne), which had examined how little financial independence the Irish Free State truly possessed in the early 1930s. The '*Review*' had pointed out that, despite political separation from Britain, Ireland's financial system remained tightly bound to the Bank of England. Unlike Australia, which had established a Commonwealth Bank to provide local financial control, the Free State had virtually no independent banking infrastructure. All credit for Irish business, industry, and government still depended on British or foreign institutions. The '*London Economist*' had made the situation even clearer in its February 1934 editorial. Of the nine banks operating in the Free State, only two worked exclusively within its borders - and even those were deeply tied to British interests. Major Irish banks such as the National Bank, the Provincial Bank, and the Ulster Bank all had headquarters in London or Belfast. Even those headquartered in Dublin, such as the Bank of Ireland and the Munster and Leinster Bank, operated branches in Northern Ireland, further blurring financial sovereignty. In practice, this meant that the Irish banking system remained almost entirely dependent on British currency and regulation. The Free State's pound was tied rigidly to sterling, and the Currency Commission held its reserves in British government securities. Irish money was backed not by domestic wealth or production, but by sterling credit - ensuring that even minor divergence from London's control was impossible. By 1933, Irish banks held around £88 million in British securities and maintained their cash reserves in London. Every major clearing transaction was

settled through the Bank of England. '*An Phoblacht*' contrasted this reality with the Irish Republican Army's stated economic aim: that the Irish State should have a monopoly over banking, credit, and currency creation, making these instruments serve the people rather than foreign financiers. The article used the '*Economist's*' own data to demonstrate that, despite independence in name, the Free State remained a financial colony of Britain.

On the front page of this same issue, an '*An Phoblacht*' editorial argued that the United States was then witnessing the collapse of what it called "the most subtle form of fascism yet devised" - Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. The paper described America as a land where gangsters and financiers coexisted, and where great wealth stood beside deep poverty. It claimed that President Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.), hailed as a saviour of industry and labour, had only disguised the same old system of capitalist exploitation. When strikes broke out among N.R.A. employees themselves, and when state forces were sent to suppress workers in San Francisco, '*An Phoblacht*' saw proof that the "Recovery" programme was collapsing under its own contradictions. The article said Roosevelt's brief popularity had vanished and his "capitalist fakirs" had been unmasked. The writer drew a direct parallel with Ireland, warning that Fianna Fáil was following the same path by copying Roosevelt's economic policies. The '*Irish Press*,' described as the FF government's unofficial mouthpiece, had praised the N.R.A. as a model for Ireland - but '*An Phoblacht*' mocked this as naïve imitation. In the paper's view, both the American and Irish programmes merely sought to "make capitalism less objectionable." They gave small factory owners and middlemen a share of wealth, but did nothing to improve the position of ordinary workers. Production still served private profit, not public welfare. The article argued that this so-called distributism - spreading ownership among a few smaller capitalists - was only capitalism with a gentler face. Workers still toiled under the same system, creating wealth for "the little bosses," while their wages and conditions remained unchanged. In short, '*An Phoblacht*' maintained that the Fianna Fáil government,

like Roosevelt's America, had chosen to disguise capitalism rather than destroy it - preserving privilege under the mask of reform.

The front page of this issue also highlighted several ongoing labour disputes in Ireland, particularly in Dublin, framing them as struggles against exploitative employers and government policies that undermined workers' rights. One key article, "Lemass to Break Strike Weapon," criticised Minister for Industry and Commerce Seán Lemass for proposing legislation that would establish mandatory courts of arbitration for trade disputes, effectively weakening the strike as a tool for workers. The piece argued that such measures leaned toward "fascist" legislation, as they would legally bind both sides to arbitration decisions, favouring employers by removing the pressure of strikes. It noted suggestions that factory owners might voluntarily improve wages and conditions, but emphasised that arbitration had historically disadvantaged workers, citing examples like Irish seamen and railway shopmen who suffered under wages boards. The article insisted that the strike weapon, though not ideal and often bringing hardship to employees, remained the most valuable means for wage-earners to pressure for better conditions and should not be surrendered. It called for resistance against any law or government that would replace strikes with employer-friendly arbitration, portraying this as a broader attack on trade union power to protect capitalist profits.

Another Dublin-based labour action covered was the "Erne Soap Workers Gain Part Victory," detailing a three-week strike by employees at the Erne Soap Works. The workers struck after the firm, owned by Messrs. Dixons & Co., terminated a union agreement, attempting to separate the soap and candle manufacturing operations to undermine union protections, despite both being housed in the same factory. The strike ended with a partial victory: the workers agreed to return under the understanding that the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union would renegotiate the agreement, securing temporary gains and demonstrating the effectiveness of strikes in forcing concessions. The article

highlighted how the company's tactics during the strike, such as trying to restart operations by claiming separation of businesses, were challenged, leading to a satisfactory resolution from the trade union perspective. It underscored that such victories, even temporary, showed strikes could compel fair treatment and warned that the subsequent re-negotiation might still lead to further trouble, but the workers achieved at least a short-term win by standing firm.

Additionally, the newspaper's "Somax Strikers Need Funds to Carry On" article focused on a strike by approximately 160 women and girls employed by S. O. McCabe, trading as Somax, on George's Street in Dublin. The strike began nearly a fortnight prior after a fellow worker was victimised for demanding her legal Trade Board wage rate. The proprietor, Mr. McCabe from Belfast, allegedly refused to negotiate, hear the union's claims, or meet with representatives, leaving the workers without resolution. The piece included an appeal from the Strike Committee, chaired by Liam Campbell, with Patrick O'Brien as treasurer and based at 44 Parnell Square, for funds to support the strikers, their wives, children, and dependents, emphasising that the workers must not lose. It detailed the committee's accusations: the firm failed to recognise the union, negotiate, take responsibility for the welfare of about 100 Dublin families by not meeting union reps, and used the manager as a shield in strike-breaking efforts. The appeal, detailing support from the Dublin Trades Union Council, had proclaimed this as a challenge to trade unionism, and urged generous financial support from sympathisers to sustain the action against unrelenting employers.

As per the previously cited 17 November 1934 edition of '*An Phoblacht*,' it was documented that, at the recent Cumann na mBán Convention, a resolution was passed unanimously which urged all members - and Republicans generally - to join Trade Unions, take an active role within them, and bring Cumann na mBán's economic policy into the workers' movement. Before joining, however, it was considered essential that members understood the power of Trade Unions in the struggle for freedom. Strengthening the Unions

was not a waste of energy, but rather a crucial step in the revolutionary fight against both capitalism and imperialism. The official leadership of the Trades Union movement at that time often compromised, stifled militancy, and betrayed the demands of the rank-and-file. Cumann na mBán went as far as to criticise several trade union leaders and politicians affiliated with the Irish Labour Party as being insufficiently radical, naming P.T. Daly, William X. O'Brien, and Senators Tom Johnson and Thomas Foran in its attack, claiming that their constitutional, reformist approach was weak. In their opinion, though politicians frequently praised Connolly's name, they consistently refused to put his ideas into practice. Connolly had never seen Trade Unions as a mere safety valve or constitutional reform body, but as the very instruments through which capitalism could be overthrown and a workers' republic built. The development of the fighting spirit of the rank-and-file was, for Connolly, more important than any theoretically perfect organisation. The article asserted that, trade unions, when organised on militant industrial lines, had the potential to transform the struggle of workers. Every factory or shop organised became a fortress taken from capitalism, to be held for the workers. Cumann na mBán asserted that the growth of such Industrial Unionism gave every strike and wage demand a new meaning - as part of the wider class war between light and darkness. If infused with Connolly's outlook, the Unions became a true menace to capitalism, instead of what too often existed at that time: a servile mentality that sought only small concessions. Connolly had foreseen three stages in the struggle of the working class:

- Conservative stage – when workers looked backward to a mythical "golden age" of the past.
- Reformist stage – when they sought small improvements to make life more bearable under capitalism.
- Revolutionary stage – when the working class, confident in its strength, looked to the future, determined to conquer society itself.

Cumann na mBán declared that it was to this third stage that Republicans had urged workers to move. trade unions,

infused with Connolly's spirit, were not simply about wages and hours, rather, to Cumann na mBán, they were the foundation stones of revolutionary socialism in Ireland.

In a neighbouring article, Maud Gonne MacBride also lashed out at the prevailing money system in place in Ireland. High finance was said to be so complicated that ordinary people could not understand it. The financiers cloaked, she claimed, their operations in secrecy, much like conjurors who pulled rabbits from hats or made handkerchiefs vanish. Their tricks only worked so long as they remained hidden. Once exposed, the profit drained away. Unlike conjurors who merely entertained, the financiers played their tricks on the stage of nations, with very real consequences. The majority of people, who had little or no money, assumed that high finance had nothing to do with them. They did not realise that the very reason they lacked money to buy the goods they produced was precisely because of the system of finance. Maud Gonne MacBride declared that the principle was clear: know your enemy and face him. In Ireland, high finance had been embodied in the Bank of England, to which Irish banks were tributaries. Blythe's Currency Act of 1927 had further bound Irish credit to British sterling, chaining the country more tightly.

To understand how this worked, she turned to the history of the Bank of England. The study revealed how money itself was created - and how it really amounted to little more than a conjuring trick. When a king or a government needed funds, financiers came forward with loans. Suppose, for example, they provided a million pounds. That loan, once secured, became the basis for a banking company to issue notes far in excess of the original sum. Without difficulty, the million doubled. The king paid interest on the first million, while the financiers could lend again on the strength of the second. The trick was plain: multiplying millions out of nothing, making wealth appear simply by issuing notes and demanding interest. It was as simple for them as pulling a rabbit out of a hat. This system, which she referred to as fraudulent, was dressed up under the title of "sound finance." In reality, it was nothing more than a method of creating money from

nothing - while the people, amidst plenty, were left poor and hungry.

In the Cumann na mBán column of a December 1934 issue of '*An Phoblacht*,' members were reminded that in that article, James Connolly had been quoted on the use and power of trade unions, and his ideas had been given in full of the three phases through which he believed mankind would have to pass in its struggle from economic slavery to freedom. The first stage had been described as that in which the eyes of the subject class were turned towards the past, believing that if they could only get back to the "good old days" all their ills would be righted. The second stage he had described as that in which the subject class accepted its servile position and used all its energies towards obtaining "ameliorations of its lot within existent society as will make that lot more bearable." The third he had described as the stage at which the subject class became revolutionary, and realised its own power to capture society. Examining the position of labour at that time, it was obvious that it was passing through the second stage. The task of forcing Labour on to Connolly's third stage was work which had to be tackled there and then by members of Cumann na mBán and every Republican. Once members realised the power they could wield as active trade unionists, in Connolly's sense of the term, it would not be difficult to convince them of the necessity of getting to know as much as possible about the factory, the workshop, or the job in which they were engaged. And while never losing sight of the fact that the main purpose of the Union had to be the preparation of a fighting force to overthrow and take the place of capitalism, members were urged at the same time to secure the best possible conditions obtainable under the present system.

Every reform gained-no matter how small-had to inspire confidence and courage, which was really all that was needed by the victims of capitalism to overthrow that tyranny. In each particular factory, workshop or job, members were urged to lead a campaign in favour of:

A. Equal wages for women and men employed in the same capacities.
B. A working week of not more than 40 hours.
C. Three weeks' annual holidays with pay.
D. Abolition of child labour and the raising of the school age from 14 to at least 16 as a beginning, with State allowances from 14 to 16 years.
E. Abolition of overtime in all trades where unemployment existed.

As wages differed in every industry, in every department and every job, it had been impossible to lay down any general demand. But it was said that the great majority of women were in receipt of mere slave wages, and the only way their position could be improved was through united trade union agitation. The feature by CnaB remarked that the allegedly scandalous wage rates paid to young shop girls in small shops in Dublin and in other cities and towns in Ireland would very quickly have ended if all these shop assistants had formed a powerful, fighting trade union.

CnaB added that, in addition to these demands, members had been told they should claim a share in the profits of the concerns in which they worked. This had not only been recommended, but laid down as the duty of all Catholics by His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, in the encyclical '*Quadragesimo Anno*.' He was quoted in the article as declaring that:

> *"Now, not every kind of distribution of wealth and property amongst men is such that it can at all, and still less adequately, attain the end intended by God. Wealth, therefore, which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress, must be so distributed amongst the various individuals and classes of society, that the common good of all, of which Leo XIII spoke, be thereby promoted. In other words the good of the whole community must be safeguarded. By these principles of social justice, one class is forbidden to exclude the other from a share in the profits….*

... In the present state of human society, however, We deem it advisable that the wage-contract should when possible be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership, as is already being tried in various ways to the no small gain both of the wage-earners and the employers. In this way the wage-earners are made sharers in some sort in the ownership or the management, or the profits."

Finally, members were urged to see that meetings of their respective trade unions were held frequently. No progress could be made if branches only met when a strike threatened, as was the case with the majority of Unions at that time. Members, therefore, were urged to lose no time in joining and in urging all their Republican friends, men and women, to join Trade Unions so that they might carry their Republican ideals into their everyday lives, and build up a fighting force which would prove invincible in the final struggle for freedom. The extracts by James Connolly in this article had been mostly taken from '*The Axe to the Root*,' which every member of Cumann na mBán and every Republican who was a member of a Trade Union had been urged to read and study. Closing, it was documented that copies of '*The Axe to the Root*' could be obtained from the Cumann na mBán Headquarters in Dublin City for 3d.[313]

On 8 December 1934, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that a large public meeting was held in Edgeworthstown under the auspices of the Town Tenants' Association, marking a significant moment in the campaign against what was described at the time as urban landlordism. The gathering, which took place on a Sunday, was addressed by representatives of the Irish Republican Army and followed a formal appeal by the town tenants for I.R.A. assistance in their demand for a fifty per cent reduction in rents. Prior to the meeting, the tenants' demand for a rent reduction had been rejected by landlords, while representations made to the local Fianna Fáil Teachta Dála were dismissed with assurances that legislative action might be taken at some

[313] *An Phoblacht 1/12/1934*

unspecified future date. Dissatisfied with these responses, the tenants resolved to seek the support of the I.R.A., a decision unanimously adopted at a meeting of their Association and subsequently publicised in the local press and in '*An Phoblacht*.' The meeting in Edgeworthstown was chaired by J. Moloney, who welcomed the presence of the I.R.A. representatives. He stated that the tenants now felt confident of securing their demands, no longer considering themselves an isolated group facing entrenched power alone. Instead, they believed themselves supported by an organisation which, in their view, had consistently defended the oppressed and confronted injustice.

R. Tuite, addressing the assembly, expressed the opinion that the tenants' claims were both just and equitable and voiced confidence that they would ultimately be met. Hugh Devine, himself one of the tenants affected, emphasised that a man's foremost responsibility was to provide food, shelter, and clothing for his family, and that the payment of what were regarded as unjust rents could not take precedence over this duty. Peadar O'Rourke of Dublin spoke on behalf of the I.R.A., formally pledging its support to the Edgeworthstown tenants in their struggle against landlordism. He argued that, if the tenants remained united, no force in the country would be capable of resisting their demands. He presented the I.R.A. as inheritors of the traditions of the Land League and the Fenian movement, situating the local dispute within a broader historical and ideological lineage. O'Rourke further contended that the conflict in Edgeworthstown was not an isolated dispute but part of a wider struggle against capitalism and imperialism. He linked the tenants' campaign with other contemporary struggles, including those of tenants in Mohill, Republican prisoners, and unemployed workers in Dublin, asserting that these movements formed part of a single national fight led by the I.R.A. He sharply criticised the Fianna Fáil government, accusing it of betraying Republican principles through censorship, coercion, imprisonment of anti-imperialists, and the suppression of social protest, while maintaining a public rhetoric of freedom and democracy. According to this view, growing numbers of people were beginning to recognise that meaningful freedom

could only be achieved by following the leadership of the I.R.A.

Another speaker, Mick O'Kelly, drew explicit parallels between the contemporary situation and the Land League agitation of the late nineteenth century. He argued that the conditions which had necessitated militant action in the past were re-emerging and that similar methods would inevitably be employed. He described landlordism in Edgeworthstown as particularly severe, pointing to threats of mass eviction and to cases in which tenants paid high rents for dwellings unfit for habitation. O'Kelly cited examples of what he described as exploitative practices by middle landlords, including cases where tenants paid substantial annual rents while the intermediary landlord paid only a nominal ground rent, deriving large profits even where the tenant had effectively purchased the house at great personal cost. He characterised the situation as a desperate injustice requiring decisive action and warned that any attempt by bailiffs to seize tenants' property would be met with resistance. He urged absolute unity among the tenants, insisting that no individual should break ranks by paying rent before the collective demands were met, and framed the struggle as part of a nationwide campaign with deep historical roots in conquest and confiscation.

The meeting concluded with M. Ferguson publicly pledging the active support of the Longford Battalion of the I.R.A. to the Town Tenants of Edgeworthstown, reinforcing the alignment between the local tenants' movement and the wider Republican organisation. This episode illustrated the extent to which social and economic grievances in the mid-1930s were interwoven with Republican ideology, and how the I.R.A. sought to position itself as both the heir to earlier agrarian and working-class agitation and the leading force in contemporary struggles against perceived injustice in the Irish State.[314]

[314] *An Phoblacht 8/12/1934*

In an editorial published in '*The Blueshirt*' on 19 January 1935, the paper asserted that all Irish people who valued their faith or nationality were obliged to accept, not only obediently but gratefully, the condemnation of the Republican Congress faction, issued by the Bishop of Waterford. It argued that the very existence of such a movement in a country portrayed as deeply Christian and strongly nationalist was deplorable. The paper maintained that it was the duty of all "true Irishmen", regardless of class or political allegiance, to unite in opposing what it described as a Communist conspiracy against faith and liberty. The editorial further contended that it was morally wrong and politically unscrupulous to make partisan use of episcopal pronouncements. It criticised the actions of a political party in Waterford for attempting to capitalise on the Bishop's statement, asserting that such declarations bound all Catholics equally and that resolutions of support from political clubs were an impertinence. The paper insisted that no political organisation had a monopoly on Catholicism and that a bishop did not require endorsement from any political group.

According to the editorial, the activities of the Republican Congress in Waterford constituted a grave Communist challenge which should be confronted on the basis of shared Irish and Christian identity, rather than party politics. The paper described the Republican Congress as the most dangerous movement to have appeared in Ireland, claiming that it concealed its atheistic and Communist objectives behind a façade of republicanism, attracted socially "depraved and desperate" elements, and sought to advance itself by exploiting poverty and popular unrest. Although it characterised the movement as disorganised and lacking effective leadership, it nonetheless portrayed its existence as a serious threat to faith and freedom and argued that it should be eliminated without delay. The editorial stated that Blueshirts were given additional motivation to oppose Communism by what it identified as the Socialist doctrine of equality, which it contrasted sharply with the Blueshirt ideal of hierarchy. It asserted that equality was scientifically, historically and practically false, and that hierarchy reflected

both the natural order and the structure of heaven itself. The paper rejected the notion that all men were equal, claiming instead that inequality was self-evident and natural. It argued that Socialist demands for equality were unjust and motivated by resentment, portraying them as an attempt by inferiors to elevate themselves at the expense of their superiors.

The paper noted that the Bishop of Waterford had also condemned the I.R.A., which it described as an unlawful organisation on two principal grounds: its advocacy of the violent overthrow of a lawful government and its support for the nationalisation or socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The editorial characterised this policy as an endorsement of the robbery of private property and as fundamentally incompatible with Catholic teaching. It expressed doubt that most ordinary members of the I.R.A. would support such policies and questioned how leaders of a purportedly national movement could believe that Irish Catholics could accept them. While the editorial suggested that the I.R.A. might have had some potential usefulness if it abandoned Socialism and violence, it concluded that, under its existing policies and methods, it posed a danger to Irish youth. The paper argued that the greatest threat presented by the organisation lay in its provision of a recruiting ground for Communist groups such as the Republican Congress. Although it dismissed the likelihood of the I.R.A. overthrowing the Fianna Fáil administration by force, it claimed that its emphasis on physical force and Socialist ideas made its members vulnerable to Communist influence, which the paper warned could ultimately result in armed conflict against Ireland's Catholic population.[315]

Referring to the same topic later in January 1935, the '*Cork Examiner*' reported that, speaking at Mass in Ballybricken, the Rev. Monsignor Byrne delivered a sermon in which he addressed the aims and objects of the Irish Republican Army. When, he said, the Church directed her light to these aims

[315] *The Blueshirt 19/1/1935*

and objects, what was revealed was "nothing less than that it was a thing of darkness, a debased patriotism, a corruption of ultra-nationalism." According to the newspaper's report, Monsignor Byrne continued by citing "some of the words of that solemn judgment on one of its aspects, perhaps its most debased one, and certainly one imported from foreign paganism." He declared:

> *"From the declarations of its responsible leaders, from the published constitution of the Republic which it envisages, it is evident that this Republic is to be a Socialist one, on the Russian model."*

He further stated that, in his view, the vast majority of the adherents did not recognise that whilst the name had remained as the I.R.A., the republic which the Irish supposedly intended had been abandoned - and one based on the Russian model was put in its place. The '*Cork Examine*r' noted that Monsignor Byrne warned his congregation:

> *"It was this aspect of the situation that I would close this morning. The people are being misled. The idea of republicanism is being raised, and the name and respect is being abused. But never to doubt that the republic which had been abandoned, Socialist in character, is now achieved. The discussion is vital and represents the whole difference between what is Irish and native, and between what is native and traditional in Ireland and what is foreign and un-Irish."*

He defined the true form of a republic as one:

> *"in the thoroughly accepted sense of the word, which all classes in society are represented and have their rights, in the sense of one nation with a base aim, an ample coalesced with God's law."*

That, he stated, was what he contended to be the genuine form of republicanism, whereas:

"a Socialist republic, however, is not. A legitimate form of government, and one who professes republicanism, but is himself in opposition to God's law and the teaching of the Church."

Monsignor Byrne, according to the '*Cork Examiner*,' continued by invoking the authority of papal teaching, adding that if all men had complained of His Lordship's teaching were to be noted for, it is to be sought in the present Holy Father's Encyclical on the Social Order, also pointing out that forty years earlier Pope Leo XIII had taught in his Papal Encyclical '*Rerum Novarum*' (1891) that Socialism was 'emphatically unjust, since it would take away from the lawful possessor, owner, or capitalist what was a legitimate possession.'

Monsignor Byrne's address at Ballybricken revealed a profound unease with what he perceived as the I.R.A.'s moral and ideological approach. He viewed the movement not as a continuation of Ireland's Christian nationalist tradition, but as a distortion of it - "a debased patriotism," corrupted by foreign, 'atheistic' socialism. His words framed the I.R.A.'s vision of a "Socialist Republic" as fundamentally incompatible with Catholic teaching and Irish moral identity. In essence, Byrne positioned himself, and by extension, the Church - as a guardian of true national ideals, asserting that no republic could claim legitimacy unless it was rooted in God's law. For him, patriotism detached from the institution of the Catholic Church was not virtue, but error: a betrayal of both religion and Ireland.[316]

At the turn of February 1935, '*An Phoblacht*' reported on what it described as the opportunism of Mr. Milroy, Chairman of the so-called "Federation of Irish Industries." The paper highlighted that the organisation's complaints, as summarised in the '*Irish Press*' in January, included objections to taxation, the absence of concessions for reinvested profits, duties on raw materials, import licensing restrictions, and labour's claims against undertakings not yet

[316] *Cork Examiner 28/1/1935*

fully developed. '*An Phoblacht*' had characterised these grievances as a "Capitalist Litany," portraying them as the perennial demands of those who prospered from the labour of others while seeking ever greater profits. The paper argued that the Federation's demands revealed the class interests underpinning the organisation and criticised the Fianna Fáil Government for aligning with these capitalist priorities. '*An Phoblacht*' contended that the Government would eventually grant the Federation its requests in order to appease industrial capital, while seeking to suppress labour's claims. The article asserted that this alignment represented a form of proto-fascism, underscoring the urgency of strengthening industrial unions to defend workers' interests.

'*An Phoblacht*' also drew upon James Connolly's writings, particularly '*Socialism Made Easy*,' to reinforce its position. It cited Connolly's argument that the Industrial Union must build the Workers' Republic within the capitalist state in order to break the shell of capitalist power. The paper contrasted this with the '*Irish Press*' editorial, which it claimed recognised Fianna Fáil's role in consolidating a federation of capitalist interests and in creating obstacles to the industrial organisation of labour. '*An Phoblacht*' emphasised that Republican organisations needed to understand that the Workers' Republic required ongoing construction, not only political freedom, and that the Industrial Union was central to this process.

The article explained that Connolly's vision of the One Big Union (O.B.U.) included all workers, irrespective of their current union membership, and involved consolidating craft, manufacturing, and livelihood-based unions into a single industrial organisation. By doing so, labour would gain control of production in the same manner that capital currently did, thereby securing economic as well as political freedom. '*An Phoblacht*' stressed that the realisation of the O.B.U. depended upon the minds of workers and the organisation of the unemployed, noting that organisations outside labour unions could not achieve the necessary industrial cohesion. It argued that political freedom was impossible unless production was in the hands of producers,

not capitalists with international interests. The paper also drew attention to the European experience, highlighting how Hitler and Mussolini had exploited fragmented trade unions in Germany and Italy to strengthen their Nazi and Corporate States. In contrast, '*An Phoblacht*' insisted that Irish workers had to be educated to focus their efforts on strengthening their own unions, directing leadership toward broader solidarity, and ultimately achieving control over production. The article concluded with a brief report from the union front, noting that a "United front" prevailed between the two unions negotiating with the Tramway Company. While the offers from management were deemed insufficient, the unions maintained communication with their members to keep them informed of the negotiations.[317]

Also in February 1935, '*An Phoblacht*' remarked that the third in a series of lectures for members of Cumann na mBán and the IRA, expanding on the "Constitution and Governmental Programme of the Republic of Ireland," was delivered by Maurice Twomey at the Cumann na mBán headquarters. The lecture was chaired by Miss Eithne Nic Chumhaill, who introduced the theme: "Banking and Credit as a Social Service." This was presented as the "Republican Plan." Twomey argued that banking, credit, and currency were among the most vital issues the future Republican State would have to confront. He condemned the global financiers, claiming they were responsible for the social evils dominating the world. In Ireland, he said, bankers-backed by the Civil Service and the Free State Government under De Valera-dictated national policy, exploited labour, and prioritised profit over people's welfare. He criticised the Roman Catholic hierarchy for failing to challenge wealth centralisation or to defend the poor, often tacitly encouraging inequality instead. Twomey explained that his goal was not to cover every detail of the banking system but to stimulate interest and encourage study. He outlined the Republican policy as defined in the movement's constitutional programme: "The State shall establish a monopoly in banking and in the creation and issuing of credit and

[317] *An Phoblacht 2/2/1935*

currency, so that the wealth and credit of the nation shall be made available for the benefit of the community." Understanding the present system, he said, was essential-both to see why change was necessary and to learn how it could be achieved. He dismissed the idea of "Irish" banks, arguing that they were simply extensions of the British banking system, controlled by the Bank of England. With their headquarters, agents, and policies tied to London, Irish banks served foreign interests rather than Irish needs. He described how financiers dictated wages, prices, taxation, and public spending. By controlling loans and mortgages, they effectively owned Irish land and industry, steering policy in their own favour. This control, he said, had been particularly evident during the economic crisis, when banks supported industries only in exchange for greater power. Twomey had stressed that international finance allowed imperialism and capitalism to thrive. Unlike military conquest, this system subjugated nations without armies-it enslaved them through debt, loans, and financial dependency. Countries and peoples were, he argued, placed in "bondage" not by soldiers but by bankers. He concluded by saying that banking was the greatest privilege of imperial powers, and one they would resist surrendering at all costs. The belief in banking as a "science" was so strong that people failed to see how it entrenched exploitation. To dismantle this system, he urged, Ireland would need to adopt the Republican plan: place all banking and credit under state control, ensuring that the wealth of the nation served the whole community rather than a privileged few.

In the same newspaper edition, Cumann na mBán drew attention to worsening labour conditions in Irish factories and workshops, accusing the Fianna Fáil Government of failing to live up to its promises of protecting workers. Delegates at the last Convention had urged branches to collect evidence about wages, hours, and treatment in workplaces, but compiling such information proved difficult. One branch secretary remarked that getting the truth from employees was nearly impossible, as many feared dismissal and destitution if they spoke openly about their conditions. Reports that emerged painted a grim picture. In one case, young women

were recorded as working from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., with no overtime pay, no union representation, and not even a tea break. The work was described as "very hard" in damp premises, with employees exhausted and often unable to endure the pace. Piecework, too, was said to have been grossly exploitative, with girls of only fourteen years earning just over sixpence a week. Critics argued that, despite speeches from leaders like Éamon de Valera and Seán Lemass about defending workers, the reality was very different. Fianna Fáil's rhetoric, they said, had not translated into genuine reforms, and promises had become "empty words." Ownership of factories was another source of grievance. Investigations revealed, they claimed, that in the vast majority of cases, directors were of English or foreign nationality. Higher-paid positions went almost exclusively to foreigners, while Irishmen and women were left with the lowest wages. Children, too, were widely employed. At one factory, most senior posts-including foremen and cutters-were filled by English staff, with Irish labour confined to poorly paid roles. Although Mr. Lemass had spoken of expanding factory inspections, workers testified that some establishments had never once received a visit in ten years. Meanwhile, conditions remained unchecked and exploitation continued. The article concluded by stressing that Fianna Fáil's policies fostered a drift towards capitalism, where profit outweighed the welfare of Irish workers. Cumann na mBán insisted that only through real reform and honest accountability could such abuses be ended. Eamon de Valera had allegedly suggested that he did not wish to make any changes to this system of employment and living. CnaB quipped that, from the head of the Fianna Fáil Party, the statement swept away all doubts in the minds of those who had believed that the men who set out nineteen years earlier to establish a "reign of equal rights and opportunities" still held true to those principles. In its view, it cleared the air to learn that Fianna Fáil leaders saw nothing inherently wrong with the current landlord system. According to Cumann na mBán, FF believed, for instance, that there was nothing objectionable in Viscount Landsdowne owning 90,000 acres in County Kerry, in Viscount Powerscourt possessing between 30,000 and 40,000 acres in County Wicklow, or in

much of County Tipperary remaining in the hands of the Earl of Normanton, Lord Dunraven, Viscount Lismore, the Earl of Courtown, and others. They saw nothing wrong in one man, whether Irish or English, holding the power of life and death over thousands of Irish people. It was useful to know that these were their true beliefs, but no Fianna Fáil leader, in their view, should ever again claim to be a follower of the men of Easter Week.[318]

Also in February 1935, a front page article of '*An Phoblacht*' titled '"Freedom" Without Industrial Control: Will State be Capitalist when Revolution Breaks?' asserted that the notes contributed by Cumann na mBan in the previous issue of '*An Phoblacht*' were praiseworthy only insofar as they revealed the appalling conditions in Free State factories. The paper declared that while the exposure of these conditions had been necessary, the notes themselves had ended in despair, the writer having concluded that Fianna Fáil orators could no longer plausibly claim to represent a working-class outlook or a "poor men's government." The paper emphasised that such slogans had become empty rhetoric when divorced from concrete action. The paper insisted that what had been lacking was not concern for the oppressed, but a clear method for industrial justice. The paper also urged that any discussion of a New State was incomplete unless it addressed the practical means by which it could be brought into being. Dreams on paper, the paper warned, were meaningless unless the power existed to implement them in fact.

The newspaper observed that some had claimed the trade unions were "in the way." The paper agreed with the words but not the idea. The paper declared that labour in Ireland had to amalgamate if it were to save itself from permanent servitude. All small unions, the paper stated, must be merged into one, taking over all members, assets, and liabilities. The paper asserted that there had to be One Card, One Badge, One Executive, and One Front against the common enemy. The paper recalled that James Connolly had taught that freedom could only be won through militant trade unionism.

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[318] *An Phoblacht 9/2/1935*

Industrial control, achieved by unity among workers, the paper asserted, had to precede any military struggle. Connolly, the paper explained, had not accepted the notion that a nationalist revolution, by force alone, could seize a capitalist state and convert it into a Workers' Republic, because nationalist organisations were not organised on a class basis. The paper questioned whether contemporary nationalist organisations, though not class-based, would abolish the luxury class if they came to absolute power. The paper stated that while the I.R.A. policy envisaged the likely abolition of the luxury class, prior industrial organisation had been essential, for that was the very purpose of trade unionism.

The paper asserted that a Workers' Republic was a government created by organised workers. Its active citizens were those who, through hand or brain, had gained effective control of their positions via trade union unity. The Republic, the paper explained, had come into being by usurping the functions of the capitalist state, which had first been rendered powerless through industrial activity or inactivity. The final assumption of authority, the paper acknowledged, might have involved armed force, but such force had been exercised by workers acting consciously as a class. The paper declared that the New State would be based upon industrial production: land, factories, mills, and workshops. Its government would be composed of representatives from each sector of industry, the paper asserted, mirroring a properly constituted Trade Union Congress. The function of government, the paper explained, was to regulate resources in order to ensure the livelihood and happiness of all citizens. Co-operation between agricultural and industrial sectors, the paper emphasised, had been essential, making the Workers' Republic, in essence, a co-operative state. The paper stated that organisation had to begin at the bottom, as in trade unionism, with expertise "right on the job." Such a state, the paper declared, had been neither abstract nor difficult to imagine. Unity among workers, and through them among their representatives, the paper insisted, had been all that was necessary to achieve it.

The paper maintained that a workers' government could not have emerged where labour remained unorganised. Any transfer of power to a government not founded on organised labour, the paper asserted, would not have constituted workers' control. Vocational representation, the paper stressed, had been impossible without prior organisation capable of sustaining it. Government, the paper warned, that was not based on industry controlled by those engaged in it would have failed to serve workers. The paper asserted that the central question remained: which struggle came first - industrial, political, or military? The paper reminded readers of Connolly's warning:

> *"Democracy, without the power of the Industrial Union behind it, could only enter the State as the victim entered the gullet of the serpent."*

The paper concluded in its front page editorial that the path to a Workers' Republic had begun with industrial unity, and that without it, political or military action alone could achieve nothing.

In a neighbouring column under the heading 'Credit, Currency, and Control,' an editorial asserted that one of the most important technical problems of the new system had been to determine the amount of credit and currency to be issued. The paper explained that this involved establishing the measure or basis on which issuance would occur, as well as the most scientific method of regulation. The paper declared that such regulation had not been considered very difficult, provided a short trial period was allowed for adjustment. The editorial acknowledged that at the outset mistakes were inevitable, with the risk that either too much or too little currency and credit would be issued. The paper emphasised that the machinery of control would require time to adjust itself. Roughly, the paper stated, the principal headings in computing the requirements of credit and currency had been:

- Provision for the needs and necessaries of all citizens, whether working or unemployed, including allowances for

purchases, other than food, by those engaged in production on the land.
- The amount necessary to finance all productive work, including materials and wages. The paper asserted that this heading encompassed the building of factories and houses, land settlement (including housing for settlers), development of agriculture (supplies of equipment, seeds, manures, and stock for both existing farmers and new settlers), as well as the development of mines, minerals, and forestry.
- Payment of pensions, social insurance, unemployment pay, and other benefits, the paper stated, as essential components of the system.

The editorial acknowledged that critics would likely advance the objection that such measures would lead to "inflation," invoking the examples of other countries where inflation had caused economic distress. The paper emphasised that these possibilities could be avoided from the outset through strict control of both prices and wages. Minimum prices for producers and maximum prices for consumers would be fixed, the paper declared, and any violations of these regulations would be ruthlessly punished. The paper stated that, if necessary, a system of rationing could be employed to prevent abuses at the beginning of the new system. The paper asserted that the absence of such controls in other countries had been the primary factor in the inflation that arose there. By contrast, the paper maintained, the new system could maintain stability and fairness in both production and consumption, ensuring that all citizens, whether workers, farmers, or settlers, would have their needs met without economic disruption.[319]

In a further ideological commentary, the opposing newspaper '*The Blueshirt*' set out what it described as a clear classification of communism as it believed it existed in Ireland at the time. The paper asserted that three distinct forms of communism were being advocated by different political groupings within the state. First, it identified what it

[319] *An Phoblacht 16/2/1935*

termed complete or orthodox communism of the Russian type, which it described as denying the individual any personal right to own goods. According to the newspaper, this system had rejected private property entirely and subordinated all ownership to collective control. Secondly, the paper claimed that the Irish Republican Army promoted a modified form of communism. It alleged that this version permitted personal ownership only of non-productive goods, while insisting that all means of production should be owned by the state. '*The Blueshirt*' paper portrayed this position as a calculated attempt to soften revolutionary doctrine without abandoning its essential principles. In its view, this approach remained fundamentally communist despite being presented in a more limited or pragmatic form. Thirdly, the newspaper asserted that Fianna Fáil had, at least at one stage, shown signs of inclining towards a doctrine that claimed the land belonged to the community rather than to individual owners. While the paper acknowledged that this position did not constitute communism in the strict or orthodox sense, it nevertheless described it as a form of agrarian socialism. According to '*The Blueshirt*,' this tendency was no less dangerous for being less explicit, as it undermined traditional conceptions of property rights in rural Ireland.

The paper then proceeded to argue that complete communism was not merely impractical but actively destructive, even when judged solely from what it termed a purely human standpoint. It maintained that under such a system an industrious individual would be unable to prevent what it described as idle or wasteful people from living off the fruits of his labour. As a result, the newspaper claimed, productive effort would inevitably decline, since there would be no incentive for individuals to work beyond immediate necessity when the benefits of their labour could be freely appropriated by others. According to '*The Blueshirt,*' this lack of incentive would make it impossible for individuals to plan responsibly for the future needs of themselves or their families. The paper asserted that when access to goods was unrestricted, foresight and thrift would be rendered meaningless, and the motivation to increase production would be fatally undermined. In its view, this dynamic alone

was sufficient to demonstrate the futility of full communism. The newspaper further argued that, while the consequences might be less extreme, similar defects were present in the modified forms of communism it attributed to the I.R.A. and, even indirectly, to Fianna Fáil. It claimed that any system which restricted or abolished private ownership weakened the essential incentives that sustained economic activity. According to the paper, private property was not merely a practical mechanism for encouraging industry, but a fundamental and natural right inherent to human society. In conclusion, '*The Blueshirt*' maintained that any attempt to replace private ownership with a communist or socialist system constituted a violation of what it described as natural law. It presented this claim not only as an economic argument but as a moral one, framing opposition to communism as a defence of both human nature and social order.[320]

In an edition from May 1935, the '*Irish Freedom'* newspaper asserted that if the "pseudo-Government" of the country (i.e. the Free State government led by Fianna Fáil and Eamon de Valera) - following, as the writer declared, the example and policy of other "illegal" Governments with which the nation had been plagued for its sins - had wanted to stir up sympathy for the I.R.A., it had certainly gone about it in the proper manner. The paper pointed out that former members of the Army, brought into power by I.R.A. votes added to those of their own party, had, through the oppression carried out by the Fianna Fáil–British Government, alienated the goodwill of thousands. '*Irish Freedom'* declared that by such actions that Government had merely prepared its own downfall. From one Fianna Fáil Cumann after another throughout the country, the call had gone up: "Release the Republican Prisoners."

The writer recalled how the attempt to supersede the Easter Lily - whose proceeds partly supported the Army - with "the Torch" had been almost unanimously rejected by Fianna Fáil's own supporters. The 500,000 produced under military

[320] *The Blueshirt 1/4/1935*

guard, with every possible precaution, had been returned contemptuously into the Government's own hands, again by its own supporters, not to speak of the general public. The paper stated that in that issue it published the message that had been read at all Easter Republican Commemorations. It considered it probable that, just as '*Saoirse'* had been the only paper to print in full the statement from the Second Dáil, '*Irish Freedom'* would again be the only one to give the people the full message - if only, the writer asserted, as a matter of common fairness, after so much blundering, suppression, and misrepresentation, to allow the country to judge for itself.

Whether, in the eyes of what '*Irish Freedom*' termed the Free-State–Fianna-Fáil–British Government, the I.R.A. had been considered an illegal body, was - so the paper contended - neither here nor there, since the so-called Government was itself illegal. What every honest Republican had a right to know, the writer declared, was how far the Army Council had been fulfilling its responsibilities as the military arm of the Republic. Three points had arisen for consideration:

- "Communism" in the Irish Republican Army.
- Support by voting and canvassing for a usurping Government.
- Withdrawal from allegiance to the Second Dáil.

In the message read and subsequently distributed, '*Irish Freedom'* asserted that no trace of "Communism" had appeared. The writer stressed that "Communism" was used in the sense of anti-God Communism, and that it would have been unseemly to place in the same rank the "communism" practised by religious orders and the communism of the early Church with the avowedly atheistic communism that had emerged in Russia.

The paper observed that anyone of small intellect, anxious to protect his own pocket - threatened, however slightly, by a plan to benefit those worse off than himself - could and would shout "Communism," meaning the anti-God brand.

Such a person neither knew nor cared about distinctions. His slogan, the writer stated, was "Pocket not Religion." The writer further accused such men of lacking either intelligence or honesty, for they failed, when looking Hitler-wards, to condemn anti-God Fascism. '*Irish Freedom'* admitted honestly that there had been a danger of atheistic Communism in the IRA. That danger, the writer declared, had been met, and the exponents of this brand of Communism had supposedly been expelled from its ranks. Even Mr James Hogan - whose confusion of the Army with the splinter Republican Congress faction, the British Boycott League, the Anti-Imperialist League, the Labour Defence League, the Friends of Soviet Russia, the Indian-Irish Independence League, and several other bodies, must, the writer said, raise a smile - could not get further than charging the I.R.A. with "communistic tendencies," whatever that had meant.

From the context of Hogan's writing, '*Irish Freedom'* asserted, it seemed that any attempt to better the condition of a poor man was condemned as Communism, whereas legislation reducing the income tax of the wealthy was considered lawful and praiseworthy. Incidentally, the writer remarked, any taint of patriotism also smelled of Communism to Mr Hogan. The paper insisted that good Republicans, with friends in the rank and file of the I.R.A., knew well - by the lives of those men - how false was the mean accusation of irreligion. On the question of supporting Fianna Fáil at elections, the writer stated firmly that such support had been both immoral and contrary to honest Republican principles. Whether motivated by fear or misguided policy, the Army had erred, and was now paying the price. Happily, the writer declared, the Army had recognised its error and resolved to sin no more.

Allegiance to the Second Dáil, however, was a question the I.R.A. had failed to solve rightly. '*Irish Freedom'* argued that without allegiance to the Second Dáil, Republicans lost the one bond holding them together, and the movement risked splitting into sections, the Army being only one. They would also lose the essential continuity that no mere section could

claim. The Army, as the Army of the Government of the Republic, had been one thing. It had been the military arm of a Government elected by the Irish people, just as Sinn Féin had been the civil arm. Without this allegiance, the Army became, as the writer warned, an army "in the air" - responsible to no one but itself, elected by no one. Such an Army, '*Irish Freedom'* asserted, would be a danger rather than a defence if it ever achieved success. It had been this assumption of plenary authority, the writer declared, that had led the Army into playing at constitution-making, into changing Sinn Féin, into harbouring Communists, into meddling in the *Edwards* case with which it had no concern. Worse still, the writer claimed that it had dragged with it into the wilderness the once-glorious Cumann na mBan. Nevertheless, '*Irish Freedom'* stated that signs had appeared that the rank and file had begun to realise the grave mistake that had been made, and that Republicans now demanded its retrieval. The Irish Republican Army, desiring the sympathy of the people, could not, the writer asserted, exist for a month if it came to full-scale fighting. A clearer vision, tinctured with humility, would greatly benefit the Army itself and the cause for which all Republicans strove.[321]

In November 1935, '*An Phoblacht*' reported that in the pursuit of Fascist legislation in Italy, Signor Benito Mussolini had outlawed "Socialist Co-ops". He decreed the dissolution of the Italian Federation of Socialist Co-operative Societies. All trade unions not under Fascist control were also declared illegal.[322]

In April 1938, the '*Labour News*' outlet (the main publication of the constitutional Irish Labour Party), discussed a report titled the 'Report on Communism' by the popular Catholic Action movement alleging the IRA's Communist agenda. This report claimed that the present body bearing this name Irish Republican Army existed only to utilise the separatist tradition in the interests of a social programme that was

[321] *Irish Freedom 1/5/1935*

[322] *An Phoblacht 27/11/1935*

"indistinguishable of Communism." The report claimed that its alleged political objects boiled down to anarchy, and as such needed not be taken seriously. Furthermore, it had to compete as an exponent of nationalism with all the "Red organisms" and with Irish Labour, which it claimed was by no means content to be confined to the sphere of economics. The I.R.A., it asserted, was "not an army" but an armed revolutionary force organised on the lines of a secret society and heir to the age-long traditions of secret societies the world over, that had come to Ireland through the United Irishmen and the French Revolution. It asserted that it maintained through its Army Council friendly relations with the other "Red" organisations here and with organised labour through its "Socialist" leader. The Catholic Action report continued that it aimed at reproducing the organisations of the "pre-Truce" I.R.A. both in Ireland and in Britain, i.e., by growing its brigades, battalions, and companies, but the strength and coherence of these organisations had varied considerably from year to year owing to defections that had been numerous during the decade; emigration, and the usual disagreements over varying degrees of "Red social policy." A remark following this enabled the reader to "date" the report as of the previous year's writing.

The I.R.A., it claimed, was the most effective force making for Communism in their midst, because its very name conjured up traditions of daring deeds for Irish independence that makes a strong appeal to "indisciplined youth" since it supposedly provided "an excuse for rejecting al authority and employing violence." Furthermore, the report pointed that that selected, leading I.R.A. men had been brought to Soviet Russia within the preceding five years for training in the Leningrad and Moscow College, and others had featured in various delegations to Soviet Russia. It asserted that co-operation between the I.R.A. and the Communists in Moscow had been close for many years, at one period amounting to explicit identity as such, finally breaking apart only on the question of control. Referring to the Report, '*Labour News*' denied any involvement of the Labour Party whatsoever in revolutionary socialism, and the "gullible" average reader was left to the conclusion that as the

Communist Party was beaten on "control" of the I.R.A., the I.R.A. ironically won by somehow being more Communist than the Communist Party. The Irish Labour Party flatly denied any association with revolutionary socialism of the IRA whatsoever.[323]

During October 1938, the '*Republican Review*' decided to re-publish the following lecture, which had been delivered in 1934 shortly after the publication of the "Constitution and Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland," a policy document adopted by the I.R.A. That programme could be bought for twopence, and the editors expressed the hope that the re-publication of the lecture would encourage readers to procure a copy. The journal noted that there were Republicans who complained that the Republican Movement had met with defeat in 1922 because there had not been a clear vision as to the State aims for which the war was being waged. According to the analysis presented, in the crisis which developed through the signing of the Treaty of Surrender in 1921 the minds of Republicans were confused. In that confusion, the evacuation of British soldiers and police from Southern Ireland was able to be represented as a victory over England, while in reality no vital British interest had been disturbed. The British system, it was argued, continued in full force.

The '*Republican Review'* observed that men and women active in the Republican struggle had therefore come to realise that the objective to be striven for needed to be more fully developed than merely the achievement of the Republic. It had been felt that the guarantee in the Proclamation of the Republic of "Equal rights and equal opportunities for all citizens" required clearer definition, and that it should be demonstrated how effect would be given to this guarantee in practice. The necessity for a definite and clear programme for the re-construction of society under the Republic had, the journal stated, existed for many years. The pressure of economic circumstances, together with the growth of poverty and unemployment, had added to the

[323] *Labour News 2/4/1938*

demand for such definition. A belief had been growing that the fight for the Republic could not be carried to success, and that political freedom would not become a reality, until Imperialism and Imperialist interests, both alien and native, were attacked and overthrown. It was recalled that in earlier times it had been assumed that political freedom, once attained, would lead to the easy elimination of the evils always associated with alien rule. Experience under home rule in the previous twelve years had shown this to be a fallacy. Irishmen, it was argued, had shown themselves to be as greedy and callous in taking advantage of the people as Englishmen or other foreigners. For these reasons, the journal concluded, it was evident that the revolutionary movement required a clear-cut and well-defined policy. Such a policy, it argued, necessitated the study of resources, both actual and potential; of finance and credit; of food supplies and distribution; of clothing and other necessities; and of transport. Particular emphasis was placed on discovering the extent to which Ireland was dependent on necessaries from abroad, so that this question might become one of vital concern. This work was described as the staff-work of the Revolutionary Movement. The '*Republican Review*' stressed, however, that it should not be carried out in any narrow fashion, but should be directed towards bringing the mass of the people into active participation in implementing the drastic social and administrative changes regarded as vitally necessary.

When discussion turned to the structure of government, the journal noted that some immediately proposed a return to the Gaelic system. This, it remarked, had become a platitude, often advanced without serious thought. Those who made such assertions tended to ignore the enormous changes that had taken place since the destruction of the Gaelic State by England. Life and social conditions had become far more complex than they had been centuries earlier. What was proposed instead, in planning the future Republican State, was the adoption of as many of the main principles of the old Gaelic State as could be adapted to modern conditions, particularly in defining and controlling the rights and relationships of citizens. It was suggested that these Gaelic

principles could be incorporated into the legal code. Their adoption in economic organisation was recognised as more difficult, owing to the growth of the industrial system and the development of modern social services operating on a national scale. Transport services, in particular, were cited as having brought about profound changes affecting not only communication but also the location of industry and the distribution of population. The journal argued that it would probably take a long time to break down the barriers erected by the alien conquerors. It expressed the view that the policy adopted by the I.R.A., based largely on co-operative effort in production and distribution, would revive close local relationships and open up significant possibilities for development. The '*Republican Review*' acknowledged that it was not possible at that stage to define precisely the structure of government that would evolve, without resorting to speculation. This, it argued, would depend largely on the extent and nature of internal and external opposition faced by the Republic. A high degree of decentralised government was identified as the ideal favoured by most Republicans. Such a system, it was contended, could be made genuinely democratic, allowing government to arise from below rather than being imposed from above. Despite the existence of adult suffrage, the journal argued that the people exercised little real choice under the parliamentary and party system, being limited to a selection between parties rather than individuals. Under the co-operative system proposed by the I.R.A. for organising production, distribution, and social services, it was claimed that electoral methods for local and central government could be fundamentally altered. Voters might be grouped according to occupation and social function, roughly corresponding to the categories proposed for the National Economic Council.

The journal emphasised that the essential purpose of the Republican State was that it should operate for the benefit of the majority of the people. This was described as the main objective. In its early stages, it was argued, a revolutionary government would have to dismantle privilege and the vested interests arising from conquest, along with the agencies that permitted exploitation under legal sanction. Political and

economic power, it was maintained, rested with these privileged interests, and it was characterised as dishonest to claim that adult suffrage alone conferred real power on the electorate. The '*Republican Review*' cautioned against under-estimating the hostility that would be encountered in implementing such policies. That hostility, it predicted, would take many forms: calumny and falsehood, moral intimidation in the name of religion, repression where feasible, and, under favourable conditions, the use of armed force by those whose interests would be displaced. The journal noted that all these forms of opposition had already been experienced. It anticipated that renewed growth in the Republican Movement would intensify such attacks, with all the agencies of Imperialism and its allies mobilised. This would impose severe tests on Republican convictions, which, it insisted, must be grounded in deep knowledge and belief. Nevertheless, it argued that once power was secured, Imperialist forces and their agents would be deprived of their means of propaganda and would be forced into armed opposition, in which they would be at a disadvantage. Turning finally to the "Constitution and Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland" adopted by the I.R.A., the '*Republican Review*' outlined its core social and economic principles. The programme, it stated, contained the essential elements for national reconstruction and social justice and had to be considered as an integrated whole. It was based on public ownership and control of natural resources, production and distribution, banking and credit, and imports and exports. The responsibilities of the State towards the citizen were defined, and in return the citizen was required to fulfil obligations to the community. Provision was made for adequate housing, social insurance, and a defined basis for taxation. Transport services were to be controlled and co-ordinated, and production and distribution organised on a co-operative basis. A National Economic Council was proposed as the executive body responsible for coordination and proportional representation of economic activity.

The programme was described as setting out a plan for a regulated and balanced economy, with production primarily

directed towards meeting domestic needs, and surpluses disposed of abroad in exchange for essential imports. Co-operative distribution was intended to eliminate profiteering and wasteful expenditure of effort inherent in the existing system. The plan rested on fundamental changes, including the abolition of landlordism in land and fisheries, the ending of private monopolies in banking and credit, and the establishment of banking and credit as a State or community monopoly. These proposals, the journal acknowledged, were likely to provoke the strongest opposition, particularly from the most powerful vested interests.[324]

In February 1940, the '*Irish Independent*' outlined a detailed condemnation of the IRA by a senior Roman Catholic churchman in Ireland. The Irish Independent published an article titled "Strong Indictment of Illegal Body," subtitled "Excommunication Warning," in which Archbishop Jeremiah Kinane delivered a severe condemnation of the IRA as an illegal organisation with communist leanings. He observed that while Ireland avoided direct involvement in internal civil strife at the time, it faced a grave threat from the IRA, which possessed considerable numbers and influence. As most IRA members identified as Catholics, he seized the opportunity to clarify the organisation's status under Catholic principles. The archbishop premised his critique by asserting that true Catholic membership required adherence not only to core dogmas but also to the broader teachings, moral guidelines, and authority of the Church, bishops, and the Holy See, extending beyond mere avoidance of heresy to encompass obedience to divine revelation as outlined in encyclicals like '*Sapientiae Christianae*.' He described the IRA's primary objective as the establishment of a socialist republic through violent means, involving a reorganisation of Irish life around the means of production, distribution, and exchange to meet the needs of the masses. Kinane equated this with communism, dismissing any notion of it as a milder variant, and cited Pope Pius XI's '*Quadragesimo Anno*' to underscore how communism promoted unrelenting class warfare and the

[324] *Republican Review 1/10/1938*

total abolition of private ownership through open and violent methods. He declared that:

> *"The object envisaged by the I.R.A. is, according to its official statement, to set up, in place of the established Constitution, a Socialist Republic. As I had occasion to deal at length, I shall confine myself at present to quoting the confirmation of this statement the following passage from a pronouncement by a General Convention of the IRA in January 1933 - '**We are in favour of shutting out British goods, but we do not believe that this should result in the enrichment of an exploiting manufacturing class. We believe that that the re-organisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange in a State based on the needs of the mass of the people**.'*
>
> *Since the I.R.A. endeavours to establish this Republic at which it aims mainly by violence, it may rightly be regarded as a Communist body; Communistic socialism is distinguished from the ordinary variety chiefly by the fact that it uses indiscriminate violence to attain its end."*

Further evidence of the IRA's communistic nature, according to Kinane, came from its campaign in England and its alliances with communist elements there, as well as parallels to the destruction of churches, slaughter of civilians, and brutal persecutions of religious figures in Spain. Bishop Kinane opined that:

> *"The technique and personnel of the present IRA campaign in England afford further confirmation of the Communistic tendencies of this body. From the published reports of the campaign it is evident that the IRA now includes in its ranks men, some not Irishmen, who fought with the Communist forces in Spain, and who must share responsibility for the wholesale destruction of churches and the*

wholesale murder of bishops, priests, religious and civilians in what was one of the most abominable persecutions of religion recorded in history."

He contended that the IRA arrogated governmental powers to itself, such as declaring war, without legitimate designation from the people, violating Catholic doctrine that authority derived from God and was conferred by contemporary society, rendering its governance an unlawful usurpation and its policies tantamount to murder. What he referred to as crimes perpetrated by an organised entity like the IRA were portrayed as more reprehensible than individual acts, as they supposedly inflicted greater societal harm, with leaders sharing culpability for all members' deeds, even those in which they had no direct role.

Kinane referenced the Irish Hierarchy's 1931 joint pastoral letter, which had labeled the IRA a sinful and irreligious society incompatible with Catholic membership, and he renewed this denunciation emphatically. In an earnest appeal, he urged IRA members and those in similar groups - particularly individuals acting out of supposed ignorance regarding the conflict with their faith - to repent, abandon the organisation, and align with Church authority to safeguard their eternal salvation, the community's peace, and Ireland's historic legacy. For ordinary Catholics, he warned that any co-operation with the IRA's revolutionary efforts constituted a mortal sin. He suggested the group exploited anti-Partition patriotism as a facade for its true aim of installing a revolutionary socialist republic, capitalising on civil unrest to advance its agenda, and advised awareness of revolutionary socialism's role to deter unwitting support. The archbishop differentiated genuine patriotism from extreme nationalism that elevated country above God, and bred hatred toward others, noting the Pope's recent condemnations of such excesses as barriers to international peace. Shifting to global concerns, Kinane called for prayers for world peace and specifically for the people of Poland and Finland enduring war's full brutality. Although Ireland remained uninvolved directly, he highlighted the conflict's indirect repercussions, such as escalating living costs that exacerbated poverty even

before the war subsided, and implored aid for the St. Vincent de Paul Society to address distress cases.[325]

[325] *Irish Independent 5/2/1940*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1934. UNITED IRELAND

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE I.R.A. EXAMINED—II.

A THOROUGH-GOING SCHEME FOR STATE SOCIALISM

Victimisation of Individual Farmers and Private Enterprise

MOST DANGEROUS FORM OF PAGANISM

By PROFESSOR JAMES HOGAN

COLLECTIVE farming is a system of agriculture under which anything from twenty to a hundred or more farms, with their animals, live stock, machinery, etc., are thrown together and worked as a unit, the aggregate comes to be in his account as his holding because part and parcel of the collective farm, and he himself becomes a farm hand working under the farm management. In other words, as soon as a farmer enters a collective farm, he sinks down to the level of a hired labourer, and inasmuch as the State has the final say in the assessment of the collective farm, he becomes virtually a State servant. The State, so that the only essential difference between his position and that of the industrial wage-earner is that he works in the field—the other in the factory. In all the innumerable details that make up the circumstances of life, the ordinary member of a collective is absolutely in the hands of the management and State officials.

Under the disarming and harmless title of "The co-operative organisation of agriculture," the I.R.A. proposes to set up just such a system of collective farming. We are informed: "It shall be the policy of the State to promote as rapidly as possible the co-operative organisation of the agricultural industry. Through the co-operative organisation, credit shall be made available by the State for the purchase of land and the full development of all branches of the industry." Let us not be misled by the use of the term "co-operative." In the present instance, the word is a new one and calls to mind the co-operative work accomplished by co-operative movements, not only in our own country, but in many parts of Europe and America. Unfortunately it has a different meaning in the I.R.A. vocabulary. The Labour Party has demonstrated that the co-operative principle is sound in so far as it relates to marketing and distribution. Co-operative production, on the other hand, is a very doubtful experiment, the point being that the co-operative method must not be allowed to overstep its natural limits and thus become a nexus of indiscriminate institutions of private property, or an underlying private initiative. The advocates of co-operation in the productive sphere in point of fact encountered an insuperable difficulty in the possible results from private enterprise.

An Ingenious Idea

The co-operative economy which the I.R.A. envisages is one very like to the centre round what are called "co-operative communities." They are really nothing else than "collectives" of the type established in rural Russia since 1928. It was a rather ingenious idea to borrow Sir Horace Plunkett's cloak for Stalin; but such a simple method of smuggling the Soviet system into Ireland cannot succeed. The Irish will not destroy themselves by means of this disguised, well-considered scientific attack. "The co-operative organisation," we are told, "shall be co-ordinated with the distributing and marketing organisations; **these shall be responsible for regulating the production and the internal distribution of food supplies, and for marketing the national surplus.**"

Here we have to do with not merely a co-operative organisation, but with an evident that we have passed across the dividing line into a collective system of agriculture. The test is whether individual farming can possibly survive within such "co-operative" connexion." I think there can be no doubt as to the certainty of its complete disappearance. First and foremost, the distributing and marketing organisations, in connexion with the co-operative, are to be State organisations, erected over the agricultural process in all its stages. **And they are State departments.**

It amounts to this. The Government will control by means of certain departments the international distribution and

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export of all food supplies, whether produced inside or outside the "co-operatives." The Government will go still further. It will control **production** within the co-operatives. It goes without saying that there can be no place for privately owned or even privately worked farms in a system where not only marketing and distribution, but production, is controlled in the State, and, therefore, requires to be planned by the State.

In the correspondence in hand of a manufacturer of a particular "co-operative community" will necessarily have to arrange, in accordance with the general plan laid down by the State planning department for the country as a whole, the number of hands to be employed, the quantity of raw material to be used, the hours to be worked, the wages to be paid, the prices at which the goods are carried and sold by them, etc. There is no perceptible difference between the two forms of co-operation and the programme for the collectivisation of agriculture launched in Russia in 1929-30.

Poor Chance for Private Owners

Whatever denials the I.R.A. plan anxiously intended that a privately owned farm can exist within the limits of a co-operative community is a bald Indian signum in the middle of fraudulency. And just as the Red Indian is confined to a reservation, it is intended that the individual farmer shall take a back seat until such time as the system of farming he represents dies a more or less painless death. He shall not be allowed to co-operate. He shall not be permitted to join the collective. If he wishes, that is to say, like the Red Indian, he will not be compulsorily enrolled and sterilised. "Legislation," we are assured, "shall not be applied to those who do not wish to enter the co-operatives," but in the same breath we are informed that the farmer who will be so foolish as to stand aloof shall only exist until such time as the State needs and reclaims the land to the co-operative communities."

Mr. O Donnell's Views

Somehow, these words have a familiar ring. In 1930 the farmers of Ennis who were holding back from the collectivisers heard much the same story. But at more immediate interest are the views expressed by Mr. Peadar O'Donnell in "Saor Eire" of March 31st, 1934. "Nobody says Mr. O'Donnell," will be the reply, "that the farmers' problem remains alive! Is his axe holding with his spade or his two horses. . . . He will stay out until he sees that a safer, surer, better condition of living is waiting for him under the collectivism. Always one age merges in another with some holding and some holding back. The holding back is sometimes tragic, but it is always futile when faced with a counter-revolutionary decision that delays things." The laggards are, of course, those who indulge in "reactionary" prejudice in favour of private property, but, Mr. O'Donnell thinks that they will not last long "inevitably the economic laws apply." (9/28/2/31).

The policy of the I.R.A., which allows during a period of transition for the collectivisation of individual farming and the gradual extinction of the individual farmer, is entirely in accordance with the garrulous strategy of Communism and, as a matter of fact, is precisely the outline recommended by Mr. Brian O'Neill, the spokesman of the Communist Party of Ireland, in his speech-book "**The War for the Land in Ireland.**" Having explained the process whereby the farmer is driven to the counties, he goes on to say: "At the same time there will be no interference with the small farmers of the older generation, who are unable to see the benefits of co-operation; they will be ensured security of tenure so long as they do not exploit their fellow-men."

With One Voice

So the I.R.A. and the Communist Party of Ireland speak, for all practical purposes, with the same voice. But what about the Labour Party's views on the question? It is not in the nature of a Government which considers individual farming to be a reactionary and anti-social form of **private production** to tolerate its existence an hour longer than is absolutely necessary. The Government of a hypothetical Socialist Republic may very well say to itself—as it said implicitly in the present constitution: "We are going to see that individual farming as obstacle to the full—the elusive of clinging to their small bits of land and starving, or at least living left behind in the race with the co-operatives, or of adopting a more sensible and up-to-date form of farming, namely, collectivism."

But should the day ever come when the Labour Party will be in power, there will be really no question as to the final outcome or fate to be met by both farmers and the present Government eventually sent to the farmers of Ireland. Not many months after the collectivists or take the consequences of a counter-revolutionary policy, as Lenin termed Socialism." We may be sure that the long run this is what would happen under a Socialist Dictatorship in Ireland.

INDUSTRY AND TRANSPORT

Modelled on the Soviet Programme

The I.R.A. programme for industry and transport is free from the crude wordiness with which its agricultural policy is expounded. There is no more beating about the bush. In a few short lines we are told that the whole gamut of farming by opponents dies a more or less painless death. He shall not be allowed to co-operate. He shall not be permitted to join the collective. If he wishes, that is to say, like the Red Indian, he will not be compulsorily enrolled and sterilised. "Legislation," we are assured, "shall not be applied to those who do not wish to enter the co-operatives," but in the same breath we are informed that the farmer who will be so foolish as to stand aloof shall only exist until such time as the State needs and reclaims the land to the co-operative communities."

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"The industrial organisation shall be modelled on the most up-to-date organisation; these shall be responsible for regulating production, internal distribution, and for the marketing abroad of our surplus."

Here we are presented with a scheme of State Socialism, the main outlines of which, as far as it goes, is modelled exactly on that which is in process of being established in the Soviet Union. There is not significant omission in this part of the I.R.A. programme. What is to happen the private industry the Socialist Government will find in existence? Will private industries be "liquidated," that is to say, taken over by the State and nationalised? Or will they be allowed to exist, but subjected to a fully supervised set of regulations as the intended individual farming shall be?

Unwanted Children of I.R.A. Republic

There can be no doubt that whatever happens, private farming and private industry will be in the same unenviable boat as compared with the collectivised industry and agriculture, which it will be the main business of the State to bring into existence. They will be the unwanted and illegitimate children of the I.R.A. Republic, which, if it does not instantly turn them on the heath, will see that they starve to death as quickly as possible. It will be well to be advised that the authors of the present constitution have no use for any of the paraphernalia of the bourgeois State, and that they intend to abolish all private industry as soon as ever they get the chance. Such freedom would be likely to damp the enthusiasm of even one's more ardent of theirs on the industrial battle line in Ireland.

Visibility Too High

Between the lines we can read the doom of privately owned industry. If, as we are told, the State shall create "a manufacturing industry capable of meeting the needs of the normal and natural demand for the consumption of what plant will be left remaining industry? There will be none, and it is clearly intended that there will be none. We see in the programme nothing but two ambiguous references to private enterprise, which in either case are ordered to a nullity by every article of the I.R.A. programme. They can only be explained on the assumption that the visibility of the I.R.A. plan for State Socialism is considered rather too high even by its authors.

The I.R.A. are wiser in their generation than the children of Unseelly Hall. They are alive to the importance of carrying sheep with them the "Christian Socialists" of the Sinn Fein group, and also that large class of lawyers, industrialists, shopkeepers and professional men, who, being themselves men of quiet and sedentary habits, have a horror of change and nothing better than to be in the good books of those dangerous fellows. Consequently, although Mr. Peadar O'Donnell, Mr. George Gilmore, Mr. Fitzpatrick and other luminaries of the I.R.A. Communism may consistently express class warfare, the present document maintains a discreet silence on the question of class warfare as well as on the question of the Workers' Dictatorship.

Of one thing we can be quite certain. The I.R.A. programme that we have been examining cannot be attempted, much less carried through, without civil war further on. And it is on this point that the State Socialism of the I.R.A. will pass over to Communism, for Communism is simply State Socialism on a basis of class warfare.

STATE IDOLATRY REVEALED

Pagan Postulates Gaining Ground

Nothing is more remarkable than the agreement between the Socialism of the I.R.A. programme. This dangerous form of paganism has made a complete conquest of the I.R.A. and seems to be well on the way to making a similar conquest of the present Governmental Party. It would appear to be forgotten by many that in the Christian scheme of a Government is a moral personality and that the rules binding upon the individual upon the ordinary man are binding upon the State. The State would appear to be a growing disposition, consciously or sub-consciously to accept the pagan postulate that the State is a law unto itself, and as a consequence a tendency to look to the State as the be-all and end-all of human activity. Ultra nationalism can conceive of no higher law than its own impulses, and ensues that the State is the highest possible conception of the State, which the Catholic Church is resisting in Russia, Germany, and wherever the human personality is in danger of being submerged. **The most dangerous adversary of civilisation in the world of to-day is Statism, and if we are to escape the coming of the servile State in our own country, we must resolutely oppose by the pulpit or more probably by the platform all the Republican I.R.A. the State is to be everywhere, to take responsibility for everything, in control everybody. There will be the most absolute form of State control over the lives of all, and this control, it is to be remembered, will not be confined to the Socialistic-level government or even by a dictatorship of workers. It will be exercised by a party which is claiming a sort of divinely-inspired wisdom, and of such all we need say is that history teaches that megalomaniacs make the worst possible rulers.**

Chief Characteristics Summed Up

Let us sum up then the chief characteristics of the type of Republic which the I.R.A. proposes to establish by force of arms. Parliamentary democracy will be abolished. The Corporative sovereignty created in its place will promote the socialisation of industry and agriculture. Private enterprise will be gradually eliminated. As for the rest, the I.R.A. programme says: be permitted to speak for itself. It is sufficiently emphatic.

"Industrial, rural and dock and fishery shall be centralised and protected by the State."

"The State shall establish a monopoly in banking and in the creation and issuing of credit and currency."

"To stabilise and safeguard the national economy, and to control production and distribution, exports and imports shall be controlled by the State.

"Overseas and coastal trade shall as far as possible, be carried by the State Mercantile Board.

"Railways, canals, air and water transport shall be nationalised. Road transport shall be operated by a body set up by the National Economic Council (this council being itself a Government creation)

"All forms of insurance shall be made a State monopoly.

"After a date to be fixed by the Government, the building of houses for sale or rent shall be a National illegal. (The building trade thus becomes a State monopoly.)"

In a word, the I.R.A. scheme is nothing if it is not a thorough-going scheme for State Socialism.

Circumstantial Evidence

I may point out in conclusion that the interpretation I have placed on the I.R.A. programme is not merely my own interpretation. Of this there is clear circumstantial evidence. An I.R.A. Convention was held in Dublin in January, 1931, and subsequently issued a manifesto of policy, which begins: "A general Convention of Oglaigh na hEireann composed of **elected delegates of the Volunteer units** of the Army of the Republic assembled in Irish people." Among the ideas **persistently set forth** is the statement that followed is a formal declaration in favour of Socialism. "We believe the reorganisation of Irish life demands the **public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.**" (P. 22/4/33).

It is true that the Constitution and Governmental programme adopted in March was immediately preceded and immediately followed by formal and equally authoritative statements on the part of the I.R.A. in favour of the abolition of private property as a result of the public ownership of the means of production and distribution. This is, of course, the fundamental axiom of all forms of Socialism, including Communism, and the I.R.A. programme is the conclusion from the foregoing facts.

O'DINNEEN'S DICTIONARY

To the Editor, Thomas Davis.

Sir—In reply to your contributor's comment in the want of a supplement to Dinneen's Dictionary, I can assure him that as far as the Irish Texts Society is concerned, it has not been overlooked. When I might describe as the preliminary work of such a supplement is already in hand, but its completion will require time if the work is to be done as thoroughly and as far as dictionary itself, as my new Fr. Dinneen would, I believe, be very chary in including words that had come into the language within the last few years only. A separate list of these might be preferable.

With regard to the suggested "Irish" English dictionary, I doubt if the time is ripe for such a project. Provisional methods would be satisfactory an idiomatic English-Irish dictionary produced by competent students is the only way of filling this want.

Is mise le meas mor,

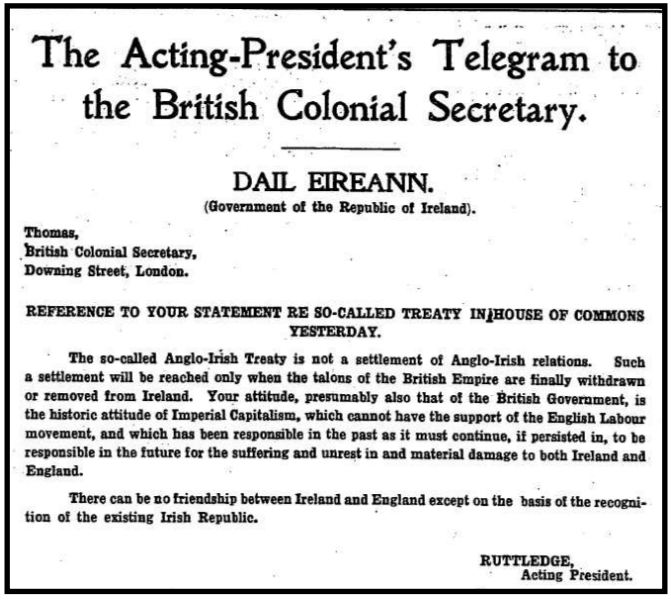
MICHEIL O CONNAILL,

Asst. Gen. Irish Texts Society.

Editor's Note — Our contributor evidently is merely anxious that most of the Irish words at present in use and not included in O'Dinneen should, whether they are of long standing or recent formation, be printed as speedily as possible in a supplement. Such a work could, in present circumstances, and by three of the almost insuperable difficulties from these we are endeavouring to save the Irish language, the work should be hastened.

Mr. O'Connell's second paragraph is one of those many remarks of despair which never fail to irritate. The suggestion that we should have an adequate English-Irish dictionary for perhaps 20 years, certainly not for two years. On the other hand, a useful key to O'Dinneen could be got ready in a few months if the Government would only make up its mind to spend the necessary money on it.

In 1934, Professor James Hogan declared that the IRA had advocated for an economic system "modelled on the Soviet programme," though somewhat theatrically referred to it as "paganism."
(Source: United Ireland 14/4/1934)



The Acting-President's Telegram to the British Colonial Secretary.

DAIL EIREANN.

(Government of the Republic of Ireland).

Thomas,
British Colonial Secretary,
Downing Street, London.

REFERENCE TO YOUR STATEMENT RE SO-CALLED TREATY IN HOUSE OF COMMONS YESTERDAY.

The so-called Anglo-Irish Treaty is not a settlement of Anglo-Irish relations. Such a settlement will be reached only when the talons of the British Empire are finally withdrawn or removed from Ireland. Your attitude, presumably also that of the British Government, is the historic attitude of Imperial Capitalism, which cannot have the support of the English Labour movement, and which has been responsible in the past as it must continue, if persisted in, to be responsible in the future for the suffering and unrest in and material damage to both Ireland and England.

There can be no friendship between Ireland and England except on the basis of the recognition of the existing Irish Republic.

RUTTLEDGE,
Acting President.

Patrick J. Ruttledge, 'Acting President' of the Dáil, denounces "Imperial Capitalism" after the Civil War. (Source: Sinn Féin 5/7/1924)

George Gilmore (pictured immediately after a prison release), an IRA Army Executive member who publicly espoused anti-capitalist and revolutionary socialist views.
(Photo source: An Phoblacht 27/8/1932)

Frank Ryan (pictured making an address), a member of the IRA Army Executive and editor of 'An Phoblacht', espoused revolutionary socialist views. (Photo source: An Phoblacht 2/4/1932)

Most Rev. Dr. Kinane.

In 1940, the IRA was again denounced as Communist by the Most Rev. Dr. Kinnane, then Bishop of Waterford & Lismore. He did so by referencing the organisation's self-declared revolutionary socialist aims.
(Source: Irish Independent 5/2/1940)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

THE ONLY ARMY THAT IRELAND NEEDS

There was a very large gathering at Newmarket, Co. Cork, on Sunday, 23rd October.

The aeridheacht, which was organised by the local Battalion of the I.R.A., was held in a field outside the town, and to there marched a procession composed of an I.R.A. contingent 100 strong, Cumann na mBan and Fianna Eireann headed by the Cork Volunteer Pipers' Band and the Kiskeam Brass Band carrying flags and banners.

George Gilmore in opening the aeridheacht, urged all Republicans to insist that the one and only army to be tolerated in Ireland should be the army that took its stand upon the Republican Proclamation of Easter Week, 1916—that stood for the independence of the sovereign Irish Republic and the complete ownership of the land and other wealth-producing resources of Ireland by the Irish people.

The 100,000 unemployed in Belfast and those in the rest of Ireland, and the hard-pressed working farmers were all Irish citizens, and as such, were, accordng to the 1916 Proclamation, entitled to "equal rights and equal opportunities" with the rest of the people of Ireland. The function of the I.R.A. would not be fulfilled until all those people were secure in a decent livelihood.

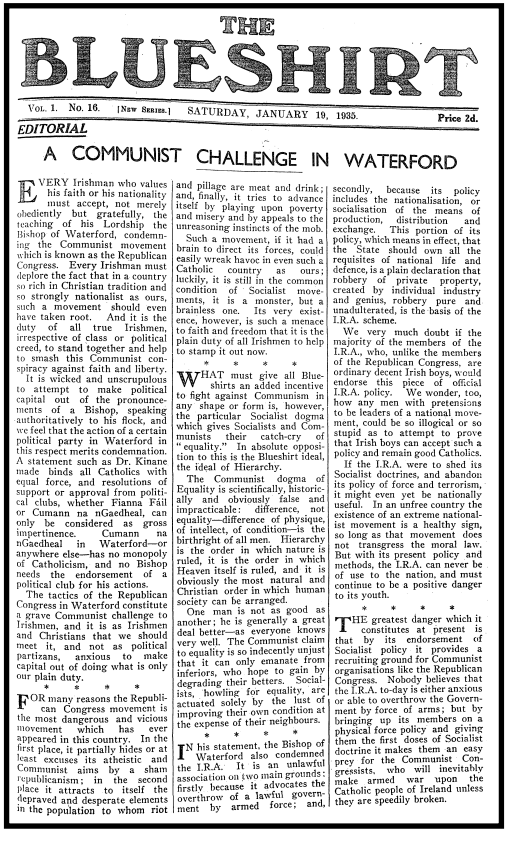
By taking its stand upon the principles enunciated in that Proclamation the I.R.A. had accepted the responsibility for the task of putting an end to the present system of exploitation carried on in the interests of Bankers, Ranchers and Industrial Capitalists.

The recent revolt of the unemployed in Belfast, he said, was the most important political event in Ireland within the past ten years. It was a more important event than the overthrow of the Cosgrave Government, because it had brought the rival factions among the Belfast workers together in mutual hostility to their Imperial Capitalist exploiters. I.R.A. men and one-time B Specials had fought side by side against the Capitalist Government, and it gave great hope of achieving the unity of Ireland when we—both North and South—have realised that a free Ireland must mean a free Workers' Republic.

Dr. Higgins has taken our advice. He has gone abroad for a holiday. It ought be a perpetual one.

A hardline Republican rally in the small town of Newmarket, Co. Cork, in 1932 saw the goal of the IRA being declared as that of a "free Workers' Republic." (Source: An Phoblacht 29/10/1932)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



THE
BLUESHIRT

VOL. 1. No. 16. [NEW SERIES.] SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1935. Price 2d.

EDITORIAL

A COMMUNIST CHALLENGE IN WATERFORD

EVERY Irishman who values his faith or his nationality must accept, not merely obediently but gratefully, the teaching of his Lordship the Bishop of Waterford, condemning the Communist movement which is known as the Republican Congress. Every Irishman must deplore the fact that in a country so rich in Christian tradition and so strongly nationalist as ours, such a movement should even have taken root. And it is the duty of all true Irishmen, irrespective of class or political creed, to stand together and help to smash this Communist conspiracy against faith and liberty.

It is wicked and unscrupulous to attempt to make political capital out of the pronouncements of a Bishop, speaking authoritatively to his flock, and we feel that the action of a certain political party in Waterford in this respect merits condemnation. A statement such as Dr. Kinane made binds all Catholics with equal force, and resolutions of support or approval from political clubs, whether Fianna Fáil or Cumann na nGaedheal, can only be considered as gross impertinence. Cumann na nGaedheal in Waterford—or anywhere else—has no monopoly of Catholicism, and no Bishop needs the endorsement of a political club for his actions.

The tactics of the Republican Congress in Waterford constitute a grave Communist challenge to Irishmen, and it is as Irishmen and Christians that we should meet it, and not as political partizans, anxious to make capital out of doing what is only our plain duty.

* * *

FOR many reasons the Republican Congress movement is the most dangerous and vicious movement which has ever appeared in this country. In the first place, it partially hides or at least excuses its atheistic and Communist aims by a sham republicanism; in the second place it attracts to itself the depraved and desperate elements in the population to whom riot and pillage are meat and drink; and, finally, it tries to advance itself by playing upon poverty and misery and by appeals to the unreasoning instincts of the mob.

Such a movement, if it had a brain to direct its forces, could easily wreak havoc in even such a Catholic country as ours; luckily, it is still in the common condition of Socialist movements, it is a monster, but a brainless one. Its very existence, however, is such a menace to faith and freedom that it is the plain duty of all Irishmen to help to stamp it out now.

* * * *

WHAT must give all Blueshirts an added incentive to fight against Communism in any shape or form is, however, the particular Socialist dogma which gives Socialists and Communists their catch-cry of "equality." In absolute opposition to this is the Blueshirt ideal, the ideal of Hierarchy.

The Communist dogma of Equality is scientifically, historically and obviously false and impracticable: difference, not equality—difference of physique, of intellect, of condition—is the birthright of all men. Hierarchy is the order in which nature is ruled, it is the order in which Heaven itself is ruled, and it is obviously the most natural and Christian order in which human society can be arranged.

One man is not as good as another; he is generally a great deal better—as everyone knows very well. The Communist claim to equality is so indecently unjust that it can only emanate from inferiors, who hope to gain by degrading their betters. Socialists, howling for equality, are actuated solely by the lust of improving their own condition at the expense of their neighbours.

* * * *

IN his statement, the Bishop of Waterford also condemned the I.R.A. It is an unlawful association on two main grounds: firstly because it advocates the overthrow of a lawful government by armed force; and, secondly, because its policy includes the nationalisation, or socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. This portion of its policy, which means in effect, that the State should own all the requisites of national life and defence, is a plain declaration that robbery of private property, created by individual industry and genius, robbery pure and unadulterated, is the basis of the I.R.A. scheme.

We very much doubt if the majority of the members of the I.R.A., who, unlike the members of the Republican Congress, are ordinary decent Irish boys, would endorse this piece of official I.R.A. policy. We wonder, too, how any men with pretensions to be leaders of a national movement, could be so illogical or so stupid as to attempt to prove that Irish boys can accept such a policy and remain good Catholics.

If the I.R.A. were to shed its Socialist doctrines, and abandon its policy of force and terrorism, it might even yet be nationally useful. In an unfree country the existence of an extreme nationalist movement is a healthy sign, so long as that movement does not transgress the moral law. But with its present policy and methods, the I.R.A. can never be of use to the nation, and must continue to be a positive danger to its youth.

* * * *

THE greatest danger which it constitutes at present is that by its endorsement of Socialist policy it provides a recruiting ground for Communist organisations like the Republican Congress. Nobody believes that the I.R.A. to-day is either anxious or able to overthrow the Government by force of arms; but by bringing up its members on a physical force policy and giving them the first doses of Socialist doctrine it makes them an easy prey for the Communist Congressists, who will inevitably make armed war upon the Catholic people of Ireland unless they are speedily broken.

One of many examples of pro-constitutional, culturally nationalist papers such as 'The Blueshirt' associating non-constitutional Republican entities, such as the IRA, with Communism.
(Photo source: The Blueshirt 16/1/1935)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

OGLAIGH NA H-EIREANN
(IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY)

MANIFESTO TO THE IRISH PEOPLE

A GENERAL CONVENTION OF OGLAIGH NA h-EIREANN, COMPOSED OF ELECTED DELEGATES OF ALL THE VOLUNTEER UNITS IN THE WHOLE OF IRELAND, ADDRESSES THE IRISH PEOPLE AS FOLLOWS :—

"To break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our ills, remains the goal towards which Irish Ireland strives. The Irish Republican Army, with its reserves, is that section of the Irish manhood who, throughout the thirty-two counties, have organised themselves to assert in arms, when the Irish people demand, or the National Sovereignty demands, the inalienable right of this nation to be free, and to organise its life freely as the needs of the Irish people urge, and their own genius directs.

"In taking on this duty the Irish Republican Army is supported by the knowledge that Irish history proclaims that generation to be the wisest that struggles most heroically for freedom. It is not the bargainers for relief but the soldiers of freedom that represent the wisdom of the Irish people; not Grattan but Tone, not Redmond but the men of 1916, not Griffith but Mellows—always it is the Separatists who are wise.

"As a separatist organisation, the Irish Republican Army must regard itself, therefore, as essentially the weapon of the mass of the Irish people in their struggle against the British Empire.

"We are ready to pledge the complete and undivided allegiance of the Irish Republican Army to the Government of the Irish Republic, functioning as the Government of a free united Ireland.

"The Irish Republican Army realises, however, that the onslaught of the British Government, supported by the alien garrison and its allies in our midst, temporarily wrecked the National forces in 1922, and that in recovering from the defeat the Nation hesitated to face again the rigours of a campaign on the full national programme.

"There is ample evidence, however, that the Irish people are ready to take the old proud way once more. It is clear that they have not yet found their leadership, for in the election that is being fought in the Twenty-Six Counties, between the Fianna Fail and the Cosgrave parties, the former are not asking the people to re-declare for the Republic.

"But even on the narrower front great victories have to be recorded. The overthrow of the Cosgrave regime last year was carried through in the face of frightful terrorism. That great achievement removed from our land the immediate dangers of Civil War, the foulest of all the evils British rule ever forced on our people. Besides, it freed us from the shame of permitting into power, with an appearance of popular support, the murderers of great soldiers of freedom in 1922 and 1923.

"The Convention decides to release the organisation from the restriction that prevented it from taking part in elections, and we are recommending our members, and the mass of national opinion that looks to us for leadership, to work and vote against the Cosgrave candidates and their so-called Independent allies. In practice, this means that the Fianna Fail Government should be assisted into office again.

"Whilst adopting this course, we wish it to be clearly understood that we do not commit ourselves in any way to acceptance of the policy of the Fianna Fail party. Reviewing the record of that party during its term of office as the Twenty-six County Government, we see evidence of its weakness in face of Cumann na nGaedheal, and its inability or unwillingness to achieve Republican aims, and we note with dismay its attempts to stabilise and build up an economic system which, for all that it alleviates unemployment at the moment, will perpetuate the evils of social injustice.

"The attitude of the Fianna Fail Government towards the Republican Movement is proved by the claim it now makes for itself for a legitimacy it denied the Cosgrave Government; by its failure to repeal coercive legislation, and by even its enforcement of it. Twelve months ago Fianna Fail entered an election campaign pledged to release I.R.A. prisoners. To-day Fianna Fail enters an election campaign holding I.R.A. prisoners in its gaols.

"We emphasise, therefore, that our support of Fianna Fail is not because they represent our ideals. Indeed we realise that the Fianna Fail administration intends to pursue a dangerous policy of negotiation on issues that are non-judicable—the unity and independence of this country and its freedom from all foreign domination whatsoever.

"We believe that the oath should be abolished, but we also believe that the representative of the British Crown should cease to be received, or recognised or permitted here.

"We are against the payment of compensation to R.I.C. pensioners and to other British servants in Ireland. We are emphatically opposed to the payment of land annuities, but we do not base our repudiation of this exaction on any juggling with legal documents. We take our stand on the extension of the people's sovereignty to the Nation's soil.

"We are in favour of shutting out British goods, but we do not believe this should result in the enrichment of an exploiting manufacturing class here. We believe the re-organisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people.

"We are in favour of separating our financial system from the British, not to give Irish bankers power over Irish life, but to guarantee to the Irish people the power to avail themselves of the wealth their industry creates out of the natural resources which are the common inheritance of all our people.

"In short, we demand the scrapping of the "Treaty," the abolition of partition, and complete severance from the British Empire.

"The Nation will see, therefore, that we are supporting Fianna Fail because it is a way of driving out of public life a party that has sold itself to the British Empire, and which would, if returned to office, loot our people in the interests of that power, and force Civil War, to tear the national forces.

"We ask the people of the Twenty-six Counties to return the Fianna Fail government on these terms, but we would appeal to them, even as they do so, to insist on full freedom for separatist organisations.

"We call on the people to return that Government, but at the same time to see that the youth of the country are left free to arm and train, and that soldiers of the Irish Republican Army, now in prison, be released forthwith.

"And we appeal to the Irish people, once the election is over, to rally for a free United Irish Republic, wherein the great common people will be enthroned and the Irish Republican Army will be their servants."

ISSUED BY THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF OGLAIGH NA h-EIREANN. JANUARY 8th, 1933.

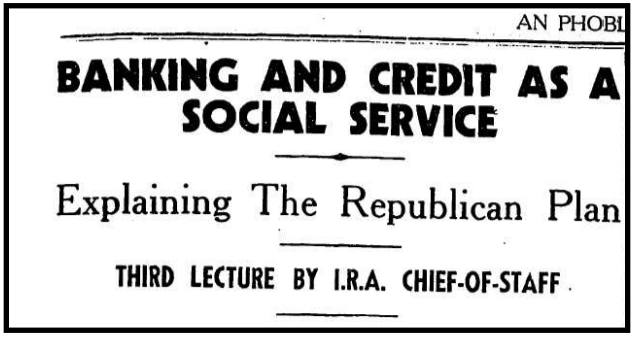
In 1933, the Irish Republican Army attacked both Fianna Fáil (though offering conditional support via ulterior motives) and Cumann na nGaedheal, also asserting that it believed that "the re-organisation of Irish life demands the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in a state based on the needs of the mass of the people."
(Source: An Phoblacht 14/1/1933)

THE SLUM PROBLEM

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF CREDIT THE REMEDY

A DUBLIN SLUM SCENE.

(Source: An Phoblacht 3/10/1931)



AN PHOBL

BANKING AND CREDIT AS A SOCIAL SERVICE

Explaining The Republican Plan

THIRD LECTURE BY I.R.A. CHIEF-OF-STAFF.

The IRA believed that the money system should be used for productive purposes to benefit society, not for private commercial gain.
(Source: An Phoblacht 9/2/1935)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE IRA AND GREAT BRITAIN

An article in '*Sinn Féin*' from December 1924, titled "Foreign Capital and Irish Coal Trade," advocated for a national policy of conservation as the only viable approach for true Irishmen toward the exploitation of Irish industrial resources. It expressed alarm among what it regarded as prudent individuals over the frequent purchase of Irish mineral and water-power rights by British interests, often to prevent their development or utilisation by locals, portraying this as the work of alien adventurers. The piece cited historical examples, such as London-owned gold and diamond mines in South Africa that inflicted misery on the region, and noted that a British syndicate had bought mineral rights in fields at Slieve Ardagh, Corefield, Co. Tipperary. It also referenced suggestions of capital being sought in London for Irish coal fields in the north-west, with such transactions occurring secretly behind the public's back. The article questioned how a national industrial policy of "Ireland for the Irish" could be preserved, pointing out that farmers often received land under the Land Acts without mineral rights, which were reserved to the State or landlords. It highlighted that labour lacked guarantees against the importation of foreign workers, and the nation had no assurance that its broader interests would be safeguarded. Finally, it issued a warning to the public to remain vigilant against such dealings and also criticised the Free State Government for permitting the people's genuine resources to slip into the hands of what they described as an alien syndicate.[326]

An article from '*An Phoblacht*' titled "Irish Banks and Agriculture," published on 17 July 1925, was a scathing critique of British financial domination in Ireland and its devastating consequences for Irish agriculture. It argued that, although Ireland had become politically separated from Britain, the country's banks and economic system remained firmly under English control, ensuring that the Irish people stayed economically dependent and impoverished. The piece

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[326] *Sinn Féin 27/12/1934*

situated this financial dominance as part of a long-standing British strategy to weaken Ireland's self-sufficiency and to keep its economy subordinate to English interests. The article began by asserting that banks held immense power over all systems of production and trade, determining what industries flourished or failed. In a free country like England, it claimed, banking was subject to a measure of popular control through representative institutions. In Ireland, however, where the nation was described as "unfree," the banks were accountable to no one but their customers and the English financial class that ultimately directed them. These banks, it said, dominated Irish economic life, particularly agriculture - Ireland's main industry. Since agricultural produce was the chief output of the country, whoever controlled banking effectively controlled the nation. The banks, by granting or refusing loans, dictated whether a man could till his land or raise livestock. The article emphasised that the farmer's success depended entirely on credit: to improve land, build, purchase seed or tools, or restock animals. If the bank withheld a loan, the farmer's enterprise was ruined, and he was often forced to sell his holding. By contrast, buyers of farms were actively encouraged by the same banks, which readily offered loans to those wishing to purchase land, start another business, or even emigrate. The result, the writer contended, was a systematic transfer of Irish farms away from small-holders and tenants into the hands of larger or absentee owners. This process, the article argued, mirrored England's old land policies and perpetuated the economic oppression of the Irish countryside. The writer then discussed the relationship between Irish banks and English policy, claiming that the financial desires of England were perfectly reflected in the actions of the Irish banks. A few years earlier, England had wanted to create a "boom" in Irish land. The banks, following this design, had encouraged customers to buy farms as supposedly safe investments, tempting those with savings to treat Irish land as speculative property rather than a source of livelihood. Loans had been easy to obtain, and purchases had been presented as risk-free transactions. However, the boom inevitably turned to depression. Loans were refused; tenants, unable to finance their crops or livestock, fell into arrears. Farms were brought to market by

the banks, often with the tenant still in occupation, and sold off under the pretext of maintaining "stability." The supposed air of prosperity was a façade - the land was changing hands, not thriving. Many tenant families were evicted or forced to emigrate, and the article noted that County Clare served as an example of this tragic pattern, where entire communities were displaced and farms sold off. This change, the article stated, was no accident but part of a deliberate English economic cycle: from land boom to depression, from encouragement to confiscation. The newly dispossessed Irish were left destitute, squatting on poor corners of old holdings or emigrating. The author sarcastically remarked that newspapers of the day were full of advertisements for farm sales and abandoned holdings, visible proof of this policy's effects. Such sales, it argued, were not isolated events but the outward sign of a systematic effort to consolidate land ownership and weaken the independence of the Irish farmer. The piece then turned to the complicity of Irish ministers, arguing that the Irish Free State's economic policy was merely an extension of British control. "Our Irish banks are English banks," the author declared. They were as English "as the Irish Free State," being branches of British financial institutions. These banks did nothing to promote Irish industry or commerce but instead maintained a flow of capital to England. The article criticised the Minister for Industry and Commerce for failing to use government funds to support the unemployed, and the Minister for Lands and Agriculture for pursuing policies that mirrored those of the banks - offering minor concessions in times of crisis, while leaving the overall structure of dependence intact. The author mocked government statements about "adjusted relief" for distressed farmers, claiming that such measures were given only in proportion to the political convenience of the government and that true assistance was withheld. Under the heading "English Dictation," the article accused Irish ministers of obeying the same financial logic as the banks, which in turn obeyed the dictates of England. The banks' policy, it said, mirrored that of the British government during the land acts: first encouraging the division and sale of holdings, then reversing the process and consolidating them into fewer, larger estates. The "movement was now back to

grass," the author wrote, meaning that Ireland was reverting to large-scale cattle grazing rather than small-scale tillage. Britain, now well supplied with wheat and other grains from its colonies, had no need for Irish cereals; what it needed was Irish cattle and grass. The banks therefore drove Irish agriculture back toward pastoral production, reducing farmers to suppliers of raw material for England's benefit. In a powerful section titled "Invisible Mending," the article ridiculed Britain's claim to be repairing or improving Ireland. The author drew on the metaphor of "mending" to expose hypocrisy: Britain, like a dressmaker, pretended to repair what she herself had torn. England's so-called "mending" of Ireland, the writer insisted, was only "invisible" because it never truly happened - the damage continued under a new name. The Irish Free State, with its British-style government and institutions, was merely a façade concealing English domination. Britain, the article said, had long used this method: she destroyed an industry or region, then claimed to "restore" it under English control. The Irish Free State was described as "the face and the veneer to hide her misdeeds."

In its conclusion, under the heading "Cuts Rod for His Own Beating," the article argued that England's policy of economic exploitation would ultimately rebound against her. The sale of farms in Clare was described as only one example of a broader pattern - the steady re-selling of Ireland itself. The profits from Irish agriculture, industry, and trade all flowed to English banks, enriching Britain while impoverishing Ireland. Yet, the author insisted, this was also England's weakness: by destroying Irish prosperity, she undermined her own markets and future stability. The article ended with a defiant image - the Irishman, or "Paddy," laughing as he took up "the blackthorn stick to beat himself with," symbolising the inevitable backlash against English exploitation. This '*An Phoblacht*' article was both a nationalist economic analysis and a moral indictment of colonial capitalism. It portrayed the Irish banking system as an instrument of British imperial policy, perpetuating dependency even after the political creation of the Irish Free State. Through vivid imagery, such as farms sold, tenants evicted, grass replacing crops, and ministers obeying English

Crown orders - it depicted a rural economy in collapse, sacrificed to foreign interests. Its tone was passionate, angry, and unrelenting, blending political rhetoric with economic observation to argue that true independence for Ireland could not exist without control of its banks, its land, and its means of production.[327]

In a January 1933 piece, '*An Phoblacht*' took aim at remarks reportedly made by Sir Harry Gloster Armstrong, former British Consul in New York, during a luncheon hosted in his honour by the British Empire Chamber of Commerce. Speaking to a gathering of what were depicted as international business elites, Armstrong had asserted that American misunderstanding of Britain's debt issue was impeding economic recovery, and claimed that any readjustment of the international debt burden would benefit Britain only "indirectly" - a statement '*An Phoblacht*' described as disingenuous and typical of Great Britain's alleged habit of cloaking imperial self-interest in the language of altruism. The paper was especially critical of Armstrong's claim that Communism was to blame for most of the political and social unrest afflicting Britain and other parts of the world. He had attributed the hunger strikes in England, the ongoing conflict in Ireland, and even tensions in the Far East to alleged Communist agitation-suggesting, allegedly without evidence, that such disturbances were being orchestrated and financed by Moscow (i.e., the Soviet Union). '*An Phoblacht*' condemned these assertions as a transparent attempt to deflect attention from the failures of British Imperial policy, and to smear legitimate popular resistance-whether in Ireland or elsewhere - as part of a global Communist conspiracy. The editorial argued that such rhetoric served to protect the interests of empire and capital, while silencing opposition and justifying repressive measures. By reducing complex political struggles to tools of foreign subversion, Armstrong, the paper suggested, was

[327] *An Phoblacht 17/7/1925*

continuing the long-standing, supposed imperial tactic of conflating anti-colonialism with alleged extremism.[328]

Later, during October 1933 (as per '*An Phoblacht*' on 21/10/1933, cited in an earlier chapter), Moss Twomey, then 'Chief-of-Staff' of the IRA, addressed a large gathering (claimed to be at roughly 3,000 people by '*An Phoblacht*') in County Galway. He discussed a variety of issues relating to the IRA and Republicanism (featuring a parade of 500 IRA Volunteers and speeches, they condemned the Fianna Fáil government's use of the Coercion Acts against IRA activists. Presided over by John J. Leonard, the event included a cable from Clan na Gael in New York City, expressing grave concern over the military tribunal trial of the Walshe brothers, being sons of a man murdered by the Black and Tans, and other Republicans, accusing Fianna Fáil of employing Westminster-style coercion. They were referred to in a derogatory manner as the "so-called Republican Government"). On the economic war, Twomey claimed it had originally stemmed from the IRA's land annuities campaign to repudiate tribute to conquered landlords, but the Fianna Fáil administration, he remarked, had altered it to collection, still sending millions to England. He criticised the Land Bonds scheme as no solution to land issues, advocating migration of the poor to rich ranches using community credit, challenging moneyed interests. Twomey denounced banking as "legalised usury and robbery," an "alleged science" aligning with British motives to maintain economic control over Ireland as a "golden goose."

Furthermore, calling for a "reorganised economy," it was asserted at the Galway meeting that the economic war could only be considered settled when they had so drastically reorganised their own economy, in production and consumption, that they could snap their fingers at the English Crown and their agents there. The insolence of the Imperialists, they claimed, had outgrown all bounds since they found out their ill-gotten wealth was not going to be attacked. How could the people fight the economic war when

[328] *An Phoblacht 21/1/1933*

the resources to do so were in the hands of their enemies? Attack on their economic and financial resources was the best form of attack on the Imperialists. It was here that the Fianna Fáil government had so badly failed. It was emphasised that the Republican Movement had a great task before it, and it must not permit itself to be diverted. The provocative tactics of the Imperialists and Fascists were designed to do so. They must not allow themselves to be drawn by them into faction-fights. They had a constructive policy, in spite of the efforts to represent them as irresponsible. They must have that policy explained, and show the people what they meant by freedom - that the Republic not only meant freedom from England and from the British Empire, but at present being shamelessly exploited. The young men, the IRA claimed, must be trained and equipped to fight back the attacks, military and economic, which were being made on the people of that country from outside and from within.

In June 1937, an article penned by Proinnsias O'Riain in the '*Irish Democrat*' argued that Imperial England had helped their supposed enemy, the Nazi German leader Adolf Hitler, even while cloaking its policies in religion and morality. The paper claimed that Catholic journals in Ireland devoted much space to condemning the allegedly connected trinity of Communism, Sinn Féin, and Republicans, and to reporting the murders of priests in Spain (many of whom were later found alive), but gave little or no publicity to the arrests and persecutions of Catholic priests in Germany. According to the '*Irish Democrat*,' this showed that such publications had no space for reporting a real war on religion. The article explained that the pro-Imperialist and anti-Republican stance of these Catholic papers was nothing new. It pointed back to the Great War of 1914–1918, when, according to Seán Mac Maolruaidh in '*Irish Freedom*,' the high Catholic press such as the '*Universe*' shifted position. Before the war, when it seemed likely that England and Germany would be allies, the '*Universe*' praised the supposedly "Catholic Germany" and condemned "Atheist France." When England declared war, the '*Universe*' reversed its position and became an old and staunch anti-German paper, equating Germany with the anti-

Christian nation of Luther. In the view of the '*Irish Democrat*,' the same pattern was also evident in 1937. Publications like the '*Universe*,' the '*Catholic Standard*,' the '*Irish Catholic*,' and the '*Irish Independent*' all aligned themselves with that of Imperial England. This supposed "Catholicity," the article argued, meant simply that Imperial England's friends were their friends, and therefore Christian, while England's enemies were presented as godless, red, and anti-Christian. For this reason, the '*Irish Democrat*' accused them of supporting Hitler when he jailed priests and parsons on trumped-up charges, because the Crown of Great Britain supported him. The article also condemned England's role in the Spanish Civil War. From the beginning, it claimed, England had helped General Franco by initiating the "non-intervention" scheme, by sending arms and munitions, and by enabling the arrival of German and Italian troops. England, the paper stated, was responsible for the blockade of Spain. Yet, the Irish Roman Catholic press did not denounce these actions, but rather defended them in the name of Christianity and morality. The '*Irish Democrat*' pointed to reports that recent negotiations in London had drawn England closer to Germany, Italy, and 'Nationalist Spain,' while distancing her from France and Russia. This, it concluded, showed that Imperial England and Hitler's Germany were again formally allied, regardless of the Vatican Concordat or Hitler's persecution of clergy. To Imperial England's Catholic allies, it argued, Hitler was a friend-and through their perspective, all of England's allies wore a Christian halo, while all her enemies appeared red. The article then posed the question of "England's Enemy-Ireland's Friend?" It suggested that with this new "Christian alliance" achieved, readers should expect a renewed campaign for Christianity from the Irish Roman Catholic press. It reminded readers that the same press had once called for the execution of James Connolly, branded Patrick Pearse a madman, and denounced the War of Independence until forced to accept it by the IRA. That press, it noted, had also described the fight for Republicanism in 1922–1923 as nothing more than a campaign by "Reds" and "Anti-Gods" against imperial law and order. The article ended with a warning: that Irish separatists who relied on the slogan

"England's enemy is Ireland's friend" should take note. In this particular case, the paper declared, England's enemy could very well prove to be a true friend of Ireland.[329]

A June 1938 '*Republican Review*' article presents a sustained critique of the Irish Free State's economic development since independence, arguing that Ireland, despite political self-government, remained economically subordinated to Britain. The author frames this argument by recalling how Ireland was "rediscovered" as a tillage and industrial economy during the First World War, when Britain's wartime needs temporarily required greater Irish agricultural and industrial output. According to the article, Ireland's agricultural system was reshaped during the war to maximise food production for Britain, while Irish livestock and foodstuffs were exported in enormous quantities without regard for the long-term sustainability of Irish farming. The writer claims that only the intervention of the IRA and the Labour Party prevented the complete depletion of Irish food supplies. Once the war ended, Britain's need for Irish crops declined, and Ireland was, in the author's view, deliberately pushed back into cattle ranching, restoring the pre-war pattern in which Irish agriculture primarily served British markets rather than domestic needs. The article then questions whether sixteen years of "native" government had altered this dependency. It argues that the Free State's economic policy continued to be shaped by English interests, both in peace and in anticipation of war. Although the 1930s saw what appeared to be a revival of Irish industry under protectionist and self-sufficiency policies, this revival is portrayed as superficial and misleading. While new factories and domestic production of goods such as wheat, sugar beet, cement, and fruit expanded, the author contends that this process primarily created a new Irish capitalist elite rather than genuine national economic independence. The state, in this account, encouraged a financial and industrial system that was outwardly Irish but remained rooted in British-controlled banking and investment structures.

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[329] *Irish Democrat 19/6/1937*

A central theme of the article is the penetration of British capital into Irish industry. The author argues that Britain adapted to Irish economic nationalism by investing directly in Irish firms and industries, thereby ensuring that Ireland's industrial development became integrated into the wider British imperial economy. Through shareholding, credit, and managerial influence, British firms allegedly retained effective control over many industries operating within the Free State. This process, the article suggests, meant that Ireland's industrial revival functioned not as a challenge to British economic dominance, but as a new mechanism for maintaining it. The Control of Manufactures Act, which required a majority of Irish ownership in domestic firms, is described as largely ineffective. The article claims that its provisions were frequently evaded through share transfers and legal devices, while many key industries were granted exemptions. In practice, according to the author, licences for new industrial ventures were overwhelmingly granted to British or other foreign investors. These investors installed British directors, supplied British machinery, and imposed contractual restrictions preventing Irish firms from sourcing alternative equipment. As a result, Irish factories often operated with machinery and expertise owned or controlled abroad, leaving them vulnerable to foreign withdrawal of capital or equipment.

The article further argues that the financial structure of these companies imposed a heavy burden on Irish society. It claims that Irish savings and investments were channelled into firms that were in reality controlled by foreign interests, and that capital was often artificially inflated in order to grant free or preferential shares to external companies. This meant that Irish consumers and workers were effectively paying dividends on capital that had never genuinely been invested, reinforcing what the author describes as a system of economic servitude. Beyond direct ownership, the article warns of complex and opaque networks of financial control. Companies that appeared to be foreign or neutral were, it argues, often subsidiaries of British holding companies, ultimately controlled by a small group of international financiers. Through such arrangements, British financial

interests allegedly exerted decisive influence over Irish industry without appearing openly to do so.

The article also places Irish economic development within the context of British imperial defence. It suggests that the growth of industries such as oil refining and alcohol distillation was driven not by Irish needs but by Britain's strategic requirements in the event of war. These industries, essential for fuel and explosives, were considered safer from attack if located in Ireland than in Britain itself. Consequently, Ireland was becoming an industrial and strategic extension of Britain, while industries that primarily served Irish domestic needs were neglected in favour of those that supported British military and economic security.
This integration, the author argues, increased the likelihood that Ireland would be drawn into Britain's future wars. By becoming economically and financially tied to British defence planning, Ireland would become both a military target and a participant in imperial conflicts. The prospect of a central bank closely linked to British financial institutions was presented as further evidence of Ireland's deepening subordination. In its conclusion, the article maintains that despite the appearance of independence and industrial growth, the real driving forces behind Irish economic life were British finance and imperial strategy, supported by a new Irish capitalist elite. The Free State, it contends, was being governed not in the interests of the Irish people but in those of British financiers and the British Empire. The final judgement is that Ireland had exchanged political subordination for economic dependency, with industrial expansion serving imperial needs rather than national self-determination.[330]

An August 1938 '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' article delivers a trenchant republican indictment of Éire's government, condemning the alleged voluntary submission of Ireland's political leaders to the British Crown. The author frames this submission as the most degrading shame to have befallen Ireland, arguing that by aligning themselves with the British

[330] *Republican Review 23/6/1938*

Empire, Irish politicians abandon the nation's historic sympathy for the weak and oppressed. The piece presents the acceptance of imperial association not merely as a matter of external alliance but as a moral and political betrayal: those in power are depicted as complicit in the crimes and plunder perpetrated by Britain overseas. A central claim of the article is that Ireland's association with the Empire makes it an active participant in British oppression, with the author turning particularly to the example of India to illustrate the point. The article cites contemporary Indian grievances - large population figures, widespread poverty, and the documented denunciation of British rule in the 1929 Indian Declaration of Independence - to argue that British rule has devastated India economically, politically and culturally. By repeating Indian criticisms of excessive taxation (notably high land revenue and salt taxes), the destruction of village industries such as hand-spinning, and manipulations of customs and currency favourable to British manufactures, the piece insists that Ireland's identification with the Empire implicates it in the same processes of economic extraction and cultural subjugation.

The article stresses the human consequences of imperial dominance by highlighting stark differentials of living standards: it reproduces Indian claims that average incomes in India were as little as twopence a day compared with much higher averages in Britain, and argues that such figures mask even starker privation among the poorest. It condemns the systematic ways in which colonial policy, from customs duties to exchange-rate manipulation, channels resources out of colonised economies and into imperial coffers, leaving the mass of the rural population impoverished and deprived of meaningful employment and handicraft traditions. Cultural and political repression form another strand of the article's critique. It charges that British rule in India has denied basic civil liberties - freedom of expression and association - forced many into exile, and stunted administrative and civic development by reserving posts for a narrow colonial administration. The author draws a direct parallel between these effects and what he perceives as the consequences of British domination in Ireland, accusing Irish leaders who

now serve imperial interests of betraying Irish cultural and political regeneration.

The article also levels pointed criticism at Éamon de Valera and other Irish statesmen for what it sees as a failure to take a principled stand against British abuses on the international stage. It cites an alleged incident in which Britain bombed an Indian village and accuses de Valera of failing to protest at the League of Nations; such examples are used to underscore the piece's charge that Irish politicians have been politically neutered or co-opted. Quoting republican voices - most notably a reference to Terence MacSwiney - the article asserts that any independence gained by assisting in the oppression of other peoples would be morally hollow, and that Ireland's present alignment with the Empire amounts to complicity in imperial violence. In conclusion, the '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' places the 1938 State squarely in the role of an imperial collaborator: by accepting British supremacy and consenting to policies that support imperial extraction, Irish political leaders are accused of turning Ireland into an instrument of the very power that once dominated and oppressed it. The article frames this development as a betrayal of Ireland's traditions of solidarity with colonised peoples and issues a rhetorical appeal to national honour, urging readers to view the State's conduct as incompatible with the ideals of genuine independence.[331]

On 1 January 1939, an article titled "British Money Control," published in the '*Republican Review*,' critiqued British financial dominance over Ireland as a form of imperial control that had only perpetuated economic dependency, unemployment, and emigration. It argued that Great Britain's monetary system placed Ireland in jeopardy by hindering migration and emigration policies, agricultural and industrial development, and leading to spite of 100,000 young people reaching employable age with no prospects, exacerbating family insecurity and adding to Irish parents' dread of unemployed children. The piece highlighted negative expressions in Ireland's face - weak government, treacherous

[331] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 20/8/1938*

minority rule, a weak native government that ceded carrots and red herrings to the forgotten majority, the miserable poor, impoverished farmers, and insecure workers - while noting dawning hopes through determination to break links with Britain, vocational organisation, and national control of credit. Ideologically, the article advocated for complete separation from England as the traditional national urge, warning that without it, political structures would be repeatedly smashed by thwarted national anger. It called for re-organising internal society beyond party dictatorship, drawing on Catholic vocationalism for true democracy rooted in the people's will, not personal instability of leaders. Central to this was national control of credit, independent of the Bank of England and British policy, to banish poverty and insecurity. The author emphasised that separation and vocational society would be impossible without this financial sovereignty, as "pagan" England's banks would not support Catholic-oriented Irish initiatives. It concluded by urging Republicans to adopt this policy, invoking a poem by G.K.C. to evoke Ireland's pitiful state under foreign control:

> *"But for this earth most pitiful,*
> *The little land I know,*
> *If that which is, forever is,*
> *Or if our hearts shall break with bliss,*
> *Seeing the stranger go?"*[332]

By this time, IRA-connected activity in the USA was also under intense scrutiny. In its editorial by '*Social Justice*' a religious and political magazine edited by the Irish-American radio priest, Fr. Charles Coughlin, it was pointed out that the '*Irish Echo*' criticised the American press for what it saw as a naive readiness to advance British interests. The piece argued that the arrest of 17 New Yorkers, accused of plotting to overthrow the U.S. government, had turned into a race among newspapers to attack the loyalty and perception of the Irish-American community. One of the early claims suggested the suspects were involved in supplying arms to the Irish Republican Army, a connection the magazine

[332] *Republican Review 1/1/1939*

dismissed as irrelevant. According to the publication, the coverage reflected a climate of prejudice, and that the press should have focused on the issue at hand.[333]

The '*Irish Press*' reported in August 1939 that, in the Westminster House of Commons, Labour MP Mr. Sorenson questioned Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare on the government's response to bomb outrages in Britain attributed to the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Sorenson inquired whether, given the Irish Free State's condemnation of the attacks, the British government had sought or would seek mutual cooperation with the Government of Eire to more effectively prevent such crimes of violence. Hoare expressed the government's strong desire for as much cooperation as possible but declined to provide further details when pressed on whether any real contact had been made with Eire's authorities. Further skepticism emerged from Unionist MP Mr. MacQuisten, who asked if the Home Secretary was aware that Eire's underlying purpose was to seize control of Ulster and suppress it. No response was given to this query. Sorenson then pursued details on the evidence, whether positive or circumstantial, regarding the financial sources funding the perpetrators of the bomb outrages, including any potential involvement of Continental money. Hoare maintained that it would not serve the public interest to elaborate beyond his previous statements. The discussion intensified when Unionist MP Captain Ramsay raised concerns about alleged communist links within the IRA, claiming that the organisation's current membership included leading officials from the Irish Communist Party and the Left Book Club. He offered to furnish the Home Secretary with the names of two dozen such individuals for verification. Communist MP Mr. Gallacher interjected, denouncing Ramsay's statement as a deliberate and calculated slander against a legitimate political party, though he refrained from using prohibited parliamentary language. Ramsay reiterated his question, to which Hoare replied that he was always open

[333] *Social Justice 29/1/1940*

to receiving information but could add nothing further to his answer.[334]

A feature, published in the '*Irish Workers' Weekly*' in June 1940, reported on a statement issued under the names of Peadar O'Donnell and George Gilmore on the crisis then perceived to be facing the country. It declared that, whichever side might have won the war, Ireland would still have had her own freedom to win. What was presented as truly vital was that no section of the Irish people should have attempted to induce either the British or the Germans to invade "Southern Ireland." The manifesto went on to state that the British "fifth column" had shown its face so often that its features were well known. It referred to the Grand Stand at the horse show when a band had struck up the British National Anthem, and to College Green during the armistice displays. All that crowd, it was remarked, had been very neutral - against a German invasion. The German fifth column, by contrast, was said to have been more open in its appearance. It was identified mainly with that section of the Blueshirts which had accepted direction from international Fascism and had been feverishly seeking contacts among the I.R.A. The article suggested that it was unlikely the Germans would have over-emphasised the role of a conspiratorial group whose whisperings could be overheard by half the city, nor were the I.R.A. expected to have fallen for it. Nevertheless, it was alleged that some wanted the Germans to land, not merely for anti-British reasons, but for ideological ones as well.

Clear of both these "unnatural" and "un-Irish" sections, the feature asserted, were the Irish people as a whole, who had been passionately anxious to keep out of the war but were becoming just a shade alarmed. The question for all who had any responsibility to the Republican movement, it argued, had been how best to co-operate with the people in organising for neutrality, as they had once been organised to beat conscription. The first need for such organisation was said to have been unity among Republicans. Instead, Fianna

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[334] *Irish Press 1/8/1939*

Fáil supporters were described as seeing a section of Republicans sent to internment camps while James Dillon and Dick Mulcahy appeared on the National Defence Council. If de Valera had wanted to rouse the country against invasion, the article maintained, he would have had to make peace with the I.R.A.; if he could not do so, the Fianna Fáil organisation should have pursued it. The combined influence of both bodies, it was argued, would have been needed to form the popular local committees around which alone the countryside could be rallied. Instead, de Valera and Oscar Traynor were said to have told the people to report to the Garda barracks - an approach condemned as insensitive to the Irish mind.

The I.R.A., the article noted, had gone through a very unfortunate period, and their control had been quite unequal to the task of leadership. The bombing campaign in Britain, modelled on forms which experience had long since caused revolutionary movements elsewhere to abandon, was said to have gone the way it inevitably must have. The hunger strike, despite abundant experience, was likewise described as a waste of brave men. Yet for all its mistakes, the I.R.A. was said not to have been a fifth column seeking invasion by any foreign power, and as its members came to see what was happening they were expected to have broken off from the odd hangers-on who would have entangled them in a Blueshirt conspiracy. The I.R.A., it was said, might have been anti-de Valera for good and bad reasons alike, but it would not have conspired to overthrow him in order to build up a German puppet state, any more than it would have co-operated with Mulcahy and Dillon to defend what was described as the neutrality of the Trusts on which British control of Irish life rested. It would, however, have been eager to co-operate with those within and beyond Fianna Fáil for the security of the nation.

The feature suggested that the speediest remedy might have been for the countryside itself to set up councils - around a Fianna Fáil cumann in one place, a Trades Council in another, or a group of individuals elsewhere - and thus bring the country to its feet and finally achieve a real defence

council. Mere personal bitterness, it was argued, should not have stood in the way, nor would it once patriotism had risen within the hopeless organisations. It was even considered conceivable that some among the leaders of what was called the betrayal of 1922 might have had a role to play in national defence, but only if the national defence committee had become a genuine council of the anti-imperialist masses of the people. The article concluded with the principles it had laid down: no truck with any of the belligerents; prompt public denunciation of any group or individuals caught in such treachery; no part in a fight between Germany and Great Britain in Ireland; and unity for the Republic and neutrality.[335]

Regarding hardline Irish Republicanism in Great Britain, it would be essential in this section to explore the foundation of the Connolly Association. The Connolly Association was established on 4 September 1938 at Engineers' Hall in Doughty Street, Bloomsbury. It brought together members of the London branch of the Republican Congress (an offshoot of the IRA), the Irish section of the League Against Imperialism, and former activists of the Irish Self-Determination League. It was soon reinforced by Irish veterans of the International Brigades returning from the Spanish Civil War. One of its first major campaigns focused on securing the release of Frank Ryan, who was imprisoned by Franco's regime. The organisation's priorities were reflected in its journal '*Irish Freedom*,' later renamed the '*Irish Democrat*.' In early 1939 the paper strongly rejected accusations of communism (despite apparent evidence to the contrary), drew attention to discrimination against nationalists in Northern Ireland, declined to denounce the IRA outright despite its bombing campaign in Britain at the turn the decade, and promoted the participation of Irish emigrants in the labour movement. The Association's stance on the Second World War broadly followed the changing position of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), which was shaped by Soviet foreign policy, though Irish neutrality created some difficulties. Some members also

[335] *Irish Workers' Weekly 15/6/1940*

continued to view the war as an imperialist struggle even after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. For a time this included C. Desmond Greaves, who later acknowledged that he had taken a 'left-wing' anti-war position after June 1941. During the war, he went on to become Chairman of the Connolly Club and served on the editorial board of '*Irish Freedom*.' Much of the historical writing on the Connolly Association has portrayed it as a subsidiary body or front organisation of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This was undoubtedly how its long-standing political opponents viewed it, but the Association itself - along with sympathetic observers, often past or present members - repeatedly rejected this characterisation, pointing instead to its mixed, non-communist membership and independent constitution.

Historians of the CPGB have argued that the Connolly Association played a significant role in enabling Irish emigrants to integrate into British communism while still retaining a distinct Irish identity. They describe the organisation as a channel for socialist republican ideas operating under communist influence, but without challenging the party's existing structures. Its secretary and driving force, C. Desmond Greaves - later James Connolly's biographer - was central to this arrangement. This interpretation, which presents the Connolly Association as both embedded within British communism and yet maintaining a separate identity, captures the nature of the relationship and correctly highlights Greaves's importance. However, any analysis of Greaves, the Association, and their links with the British and Irish communist parties in the post-war period must also take account of the difficult conditions facing communism at the time, along with internal divisions and disputes over fundamental political positions. Among some Irish members of the CPGB, the Connolly Association was seen not as an asset, but as an obstacle, and Greaves in particular was viewed as a rival.[336] Tim Pat Coogan noted in '*Wherever Green is Worn: The Story of the Irish Diaspora*'

[336] *Smylie, P (2017). 'The CPGB, the Connolly Association and Irish communism, 1945–1962.' Westminster Research. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2017.1346902*

that it was largely unsuccessful in raising the political consciousness of the Irish in Great Britain.[337]

[337] *Coogan, T (2002). Wherever Green is Worn: 'The Story of the Irish Diaspora.' Palgrave.*

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?

SAOIRSE éireann
WOLFE TONE WEEKLY

Vol. I. No. 51. SATURDAY, AUGUST 20th, 1938 Twopence.

THE EMPIRE TO WHICH WE BELONG

ONE of the many shames that have come to Ireland, indeed the most degrading one, is the voluntary submission of the politicians in power to the Crown of England, their voluntary and slavish acceptance of the British Empire.

READ

THIS acceptance of and close association with the Robber of the world and the undertaking to defend her and supply her with food in time of war means that Ireland becomes a persecutor of all the peoples who are being robbed and debased and pauperised by England.

THIS

IT means that Ireland, who has ever been the friend of the weak and oppressed, now takes a hand in the British work of beating, brutalising and plundering India into submission Here are some facts about England's benign rule in a country where she is an invader without right or justification as she is in Ireland and in many another land.

TERRIBLE

INDIA has a population of Three Hundred and Fifty Millions, who are spread through her Seven Hundred Thousand villages . . . One-third of the country is under the rule of the Princes who give allegiance to the British Crown.

STORY OF

THE average income of an Indian is Twopence per day, as against the British average of Four Shillings per day. It should be understood that in arriving at the average, the millions of the millionaires have been taken into account. It therefore follows that many have no income at all in their own rich land and that they are living on the slums and dales that are flung to them as a bone is flung to a hungry outcast dog.

BRITISH

SAID the Indians in their Declaration of Independence in 1920: "The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain complete independence."

RULE IN

"INDIA has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people (by the British robbers now supported by Ireland) is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is Twopence per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay, 20 per cent. are raised from the land revenue derived from th peasantry, and 3 per cent. from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

INDIA AND

"VILLAGE industries, such as hand-spinning, have been destroyed (as they were destroyed by the British robbers in Ireland, the little 'statesmen' of which are now helping the Empire to crush India) leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months of the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted for the crafts thus destroyed.

REMEMBER

CUSTOMS and currency have been so manipulated as to keep further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but to sustain a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio, which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

THAT IRELAND

"THE rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us, and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is stifled, and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

IS NOW

"CULTURALLY, the system of education has torn us from our moorings and our training has made us long the very chains that bind us." And the little Irish 'statesmen' are helping England to commit in India the very same crimes she has been committing in Ireland for hundreds of years!

PART OF THE

SPIRITUALLY, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly, and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistances, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression."

IMPERIAL

FOUR years after that Declaration of Independence, England, the new Friend of Ireland, the champion at Geneva of all oppressed peoples, wiped out a whole Indian village by bombing it from the air, because it was suspected of having harboured and political refugee. No protest against that savage act was made at the League of Nations by Mr. de Valera, who, indeed, less than a year ago, played second fiddle to that Socinin Indian, the Aga Khan, at the British-made institution in Geneva.

MACHINE

TERENCE MacSWINEY said that if we were ever to get our independence by helping to crush some other struggling people it would be better that we should remain in slavery. We have not got our independence, or anything resembling it, but the slaves in power in Ireland have tied us to the British chariot that is crushing the Indian nation out of existence. How long will Ireland, "the once proud people of Banba," allow itself to be the assistant of the Hangman and Robber of the earth?

SEAN MOR.

SOISCÉAL na SAOIRSE

Cáinig fiosceal na fiaiupe amach mu mbaineann na hÓglaigh a Dheanadh Eachtrama agus na Daoine, a Dheanann Cinn cáilíne agus Lasmuide, agus mu mbeit Mórán Ceoil á gu mbeannuit uaina le n-a linn péin.

* * *

Mairg fé na Cáinig fé amach cáid na heagla roimh-re agus na Cuireann na Gluaiseacta saithe mu Cuireann an bun teite i gcé Beann a Deir an fiosceal céadna mu Cnaoi-Chaitlíocáid i se Leasaidh ar fuid na hEire agus beaje mu Oéanam na péu.

* * *

D'éalt an Saighdiúr fén agus Mhéig go geal, tá aéc coipe nac fuil fiosceal na fiaiupe poblamda go cinnte agamn Cáinig Dheagh Gnann ann agus Deireadh eile, aéc sil Gaoidh Linn go péil.

* * *

Cuireas an Fiaiupe mu Mhéadh aip. Cuireas an Fiaiupe-Cogaire mu Cuireann é Cuid Cuid na hÉireann agus é mu Cuir i gcéill mon aip é aca as Cirse fiaiupe 'nip Gonóideal uinn.

* * *

Cá na fiaiupe mór inte Gann mar n-aitiúnaidh go minic Cuirid agus Cipe i gcéill-Cáin, aéc ni an Mórán Cuirid agann agus a Gaéilge ann an fiaiupe bán.

* * *

Cuireann cuid agus Cuireas agus Cuirc agus i Cuirp na hainnise na hÉireann agus agus Cuirid a Cuireann Gaoidhealg agus Cuirp Cuirc a'Cuirp an Gaeilge i.

PENSIONERS AND PRISONERS

We direct the attention of our readers to page 5 of this issue. We ask them to read the article in column 1 and then to study the list of prisoners in columns 3 and 4, and then to think for a while on the political trickery that has brought about such a state of things and made it possible for men who only a few years ago were active members of the I.R.A. to ignore Republican prisoners enduring savage sentences *for being faithful*, and at the same time protest against a nominal sentence of one month being passed on a compromising party politician! Do the ex-I.R.A. of Meath regard the Republican prisoners in the Six Counties as criminals? That is a fair question.

IRELAND AND THE COMING WAR
By Dumhnal Mac—Next Week

A front page feature for an Irish Republican newspaper condemns the perceived wilful economic and institutional connection of Éire and the Empire.
(Photo source: Wolfe Tone Weekly 20/8/1938)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
THE CITIZENS' ARMY REVIVED

A report from the '*Republican Congress*' on 26 May 1934 (previously cited) documented a meeting of the Phoenix Social and Literary Club in Liberty Hall, Dublin City centre. It described a well-attended discussion in which a large number of audience members participated, many of them recalling personal memories of James Connolly in his later years. The discussion centred on Connolly's political methods and on contemporary concerns within the republican and labour movements. During the exchange, one participant asked whether the speaker could explain more precisely how Connolly had originally envisaged achieving his political ideals in the period before the concept of armed revolution had become widely accepted. In response, Mr Brannigan stated that Connolly had emphasised education and the use of electoral politics as means of preparing the people to assume control of society. Brannigan summarised Connolly's approach in the oft-quoted formulation:

"Peaceably if possible; forcibly if necessary."

Several former members of the Irish Citizen Army then recalled that Connolly had nevertheless been firmly resolved that a stand should be made in 1916. They stated that he had asked members of the Citizen Army whether they were prepared to take action even if the Irish Volunteers declined to do so. In a later part of the discussion, attention turned to the Irish Citizen Army itself and to the perceived threat of fascism. One speaker, referring explicitly to the growth of fascist movements, asked whether it was not necessary to reorganise the Citizen Army in order to oppose them effectively. The report noted the view that fascism was gaining strength and that no decisive action was being taken to resist it. While speeches were being made, the speaker argued that rhetoric alone would not stem the advance of fascist influence. Without a clearly organised and armed working-class body, it was suggested, workers would be vulnerable to intimidation and repression. The report concluded by citing claims that instances had already

occurred in which employers were compelling workers to join the Blueshirts on pain of dismissal, a development presented as evidence of the urgency of organised resistance.

In June 1934, an article referred to "The Bodenstown Scene" with Mr. Proinnsias Puirseal, writing on behalf of the Council of the Irish Citizens' Army, explaining why the ICA withdrew from the Bodenstown commemoration and marched back to the assembly field. The withdrawal, the Council stated, was a protest against a disgraceful incident that had occurred during the assembly at Sallins, when members of the IRA had attempted to seize a scroll and tricolour being carried by the Republican Congress groups who had been marching alongside the Citizen Army. The Council expressed strong indignation at the attack, describing it as particularly shameful because the assaulted group had included Protestant workers from Belfast's Orange district, who had come south for the first time to unite with southern workers in a common struggle for political and economic freedom. In light of the circumstances, the ICA felt it had no option but to leave the cemetery and withdraw from the ceremony entirely. The Council also thanked the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI) Band for having joined in the protest against the disorder. Puirseal concluded that the Citizen Army's actions had been motivated by a desire to demonstrate that Dublin's working-class movement rejected sectarianism, and stood in solidarity with workers from the North.[338]

Also that month, in a contribution to '*Republican Congress*,' P. J. Hogan stated that he followed with interest the paper's criticisms of the I.R.A. leadership, not because he opposed the I.R.A. - of which he noted he had until recently been a member - but because he was deeply concerned with the future development of what he described as the most powerful armed anti-imperialist force in existence, and indeed the only such force. Hogan remarked that he detected restraint in the criticisms directed at the I.R.A. leadership. He observed that many people mistakenly regarded Republican

[338] *Irish Independent 18/6/1934*

Congress as a rival I.R.A. organisation, and he acknowledged the editors' anxiety to make clear that the issue did not concern an organisational split within the I.R.A. Nevertheless, Hogan argued that, to a considerable extent, the conflict did represent a split between what he termed the I.C.A.-minded and the I.R.A.-minded sections - that is, between revolutionary and nationalist tendencies. He maintained that while a revolutionary policy had dominated the councils of the I.R.A., participation in the organisation remained possible for those committed to that outlook. Once, however, the I.R.A. leadership demonstrated that it was de-radicalising, abandoning its revolutionary objectives and attempting to compel others to do likewise, Hogan argued that there was no purpose in remaining within the organisation.

Hogan further contended that, unintentionally, the I.R.A. leadership was "clearing the air" by revealing its true political character. In his view, the leadership of 1934 were exposing themselves as conventional nationalists, rather than revolutionaries. Although they failed, he argued, to address the specific charges made against them, resorted instead to counter-accusations, and continued to pay lip service to revolutionary ideals, Hogan maintained that their statements nevertheless unconsciously revealed their underlying attitudes. As an example, Hogan cited a speech by Moss Twomey in Dublin on 3 June, in which Twomey stated that the tragedy of the previous two years was that the Fianna Fáil government had been forced by imperialist pressure into conflict with the I.R.A. Hogan interpreted this as implying that no fundamental difference existed between the I.R.A. leadership and the Fianna Fáil party, with the only distinctions lying in tactics and tempo. He characterised this view as treating the conflict as an unfortunate estrangement caused by imperialist interference rather than as a clash of opposing social and political interests. By contrast, Hogan explained that the Republican Congress perspective held that Fianna Fáil represented Irish capitalism and that, if republican objectives were to be achieved, this capitalist system necessarily had to be uprooted. He concluded by posing the question of whether this disagreement did not in

fact represent the division between the I.C.A.-minded and the I.R.A.-minded tendencies to which he had referred.[339]

In August 1934, the '*Republican Congress*' published a report entitled "Citizen Army Message to the Anti-War Congress", presenting the text of a declaration delivered at an anti-war congress held in Sheffield. The declaration set out the Irish Citizen Army's position on the prospect of a new European war and its responsibilities within an international working-class movement. In the declaration, the I.C.A. pledged itself, alongside what it described as its class comrades in every country, to fulfil its duty to the working class of Ireland and of the wider world in the event of an approaching European crisis. It grounded this commitment in the teachings of its former commander, James Connolly, who had led the Citizen Army during the Easter Rising of 1916. Connolly was cited as having taught that "the signal for war ought to be the signal for rebellion", and that the outbreak of war should serve as a call to social revolution. The declaration characterised war as the most acute expression of imperialist policy, aimed at the ruthless exploitation of workers, small farmers, and oppressed peoples internationally. It argued that the only effective means of preventing war was the overthrow of imperialism in all its forms and in every country. In this context, the statement identified British imperialism as a central obstacle and reiterated Connolly's strategic argument that Ireland represented a critical point of vulnerability within the British Empire. Connolly's view was quoted to the effect that armed conflict in Ireland would pose a greater danger to British imperial power than defeats suffered elsewhere in the empire. The declaration emphasised the pride of the Irish working class in the revolutionary leadership provided by Connolly during the First World War, particularly in contrast to what it described as the widespread betrayal by socialist leaders of the Second International.

It asserted that Connolly's doctrines remained valid and that contemporary conditions offered even greater possibilities

[339] *Republican Congress 23/6/1934*

for their realisation. His call of August 1914 was quoted at length, urging workers across Europe to erect barricades, disrupt transport, and resist war through revolutionary action rather than slaughter one another for the benefit of ruling elites. The text further recalled Connolly's reflections from March 1915, in which he argued that socialist workers in all belligerent countries should have refused to fight one another, even at the risk of civil war. Such a conflict, it maintained, would have resulted in fewer losses among socialists than the imperialist war and would have represented a conscious sacrifice for a cause understood and chosen, rather than death in service of interests alien to the working class. In its concluding section, the declaration stated that the Irish Citizen Army, imbued with the principles of its founder, would continue the struggle against imperialist war in cooperation with republican and labour organisations in Ireland, as well as with the Irish and British labour movements. It committed the organisation to resisting any attempt to use Ireland as a logistical base for British military forces in a future war and to mobilising workers to take control of key sites of production and transport, including factories, workshops, railways, and docks. The declaration also appealed to Irish workers in Britain to actively support anti-war measures and affirmed that, drawing lessons from the experiences of Russian, German, and Austrian workers, the I.C.A. would work towards the destruction of British imperialism in Ireland through the creation of a Workers' Republic.[340]

The December 1934 commentary published on the front page of the '*Republican Congress*' under the headline "I.R.A. and I.C.A. Not Enemies" set out to rebut claims that the formation of the Republican Congress represented an attempt to establish a rival organisation to the Irish Republican Army. It asserted that the majority of those who resigned from the I.R.A. earlier that year and initiated the Congress had no intention of creating a competing force. Their stated aim, rather, was to unite the rank and file of republican and working-class organisations within a broad united front.

[340] *Republican Congress 11/8/1934*

According to the article, the mass expulsions of Congress supporters from the I.R.A. fundamentally altered the situation. As a consequence, the Irish Citizen Army (I.C.A.), which had previously existed as little more than a small group of veterans in Dublin, was significantly strengthened by the influx of several hundred new recruits. The commentary was sharply critical of Michael Price, whom it portrayed as being preoccupied with the idea of establishing a rival political party and a rival army to the I.R.A. It noted that his proposals had been defeated at the first Republican Congress in September of the previous year, and claimed that this defeat had embittered him against the majority, who favoured a united front of republican and working-class organisations. Under the sub-heading "A Whole Army Dismissed", the article described what it characterised as a farcical outcome of this bitterness. Price was said to have attempted to disband the entire rank and file of the I.C.A. in order to surround himself with a small committee from which he hoped to recruit a new party. The rank and file, however, reportedly refused to accept this decision. The majority of small I.C.A. units were described as having instead repudiated Price's authority, leaving him, in the words of the commentary, with more official notepaper than adherents. The article claimed that proclamations continued to be issued from a headquarters whose administrative staff was almost as large as its active membership. The commentary concluded by dismissing the dispute as of little interest to Irish republicans more broadly. It argued that further discussion would be a waste of time and emphasised that names, titles and constitutions were of secondary importance. While conceding that Price might continue to style himself as head of the I.C.A., even against majority opinion, the article insisted that the central task remained the unification of republican and working-class forces. It reiterated that there was no hostility towards the I.R.A. rank and file, nor towards those few individuals who remained aligned with Price, and urged readers to ignore what it termed an unproductive squabble and to continue the work of building unity.[341]

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[341] *Republican Congress 8/12/1934*

A report in the '*Republican Congress*' from 15 December 1934 (already cited) highlighted an Irish Citizen Army céilí, which was held in the Workers' Hall under the auspices of the South Dublin I.C.A., attracting a large attendance of local republicans and visitors from the city. The presence of Fianna and Cumann na gCailíní uniforms added visual symbolism to the gathering. In a brief address, Liam Kelly highlighted the significance of 6 and 8 December in the republican calendar, marking the betrayal of the Republic and the execution of the Four Martyrs in 1922. He argued that the responsibility of the contemporary generation was to complete the task that Liam Mellows and his comrades had been prevented from finishing. Roddy Connolly also addressed the gathering, welcoming representatives of the small Northern Division of the Irish Citizen Army and urging the youth of Dublin County to understand the political principles for which Mellows had lived and died. Such understanding, he argued, was essential if a new generation was to play its part in completing the unfinished struggle for the Republic.

During early April 1935, three men were fined £5 each, with the alternative of a month's imprisonment, at Belfast, for collecting money for the Arms Fund of the Irish Citizens' Army. The individuals concerned were Victor Barr, Swift St.; Patrick Doherty, Herbert St.; and William McNeil, Bond St. None of these persons made any reply to questions addressed to them, and they were given a deadline of four weeks in which to pay. The charges were brought forward under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act, and on the application of District-Inspector Keelan, who prosecuted, 0/0.5 found in envelopes on the individuals was forfeited.[342]

The '*Irish Independent*' reported in late April 1935 that the trial of six Dublin men accused of belonging to an illegal organisation had opened in court, but was adjourned until the following week. The defendants were John Nalty of 11 East Road, Inchicore; William Scott of 7 New Road, Inchicore;

[342] *Irish Independent 11/4/1935*

Leo Burdock of 6 Marrowbone Lane; Michael Price of 7 St. Michael's Road; Michael Kelly of 75 Eccles Street; and Joseph Hendley of 8 Fitzgerald Street, Harold's Cross. Except for Price, all the accused had refused to respond to questions from the Gardaí. The court entered pleas of not guilty on their behalf, as they declined to plead, and none had professional legal representation.

Mr. Black stated that Price had given partial answers to the Gardaí, and that the unlawful association he was alleged to have joined, if indeed it was unlawful, was not the IRA, but rather, the Irish Citizens' Army (ICA). Scott denied that documents said to have been discovered at his home were ever in his possession or belonged to him. Detective-Officer Keelan testified that he had arrested Price and, during a search of his office, had found a copy of the Irish Citizen Army's constitution and several issues of the '*Citizen Army Bulletin*.' Price cross-examined Keelan extensively about the ICA's constitution and the documents in question. Another document found in Price's office, dated 23 March 1935, was addressed to the "Adjutant, Irish Citizen Army, Belfast." It criticised the inactivity of the Belfast branch and urged it to organise for the upcoming Connolly Commemoration events in May. When reading this letter aloud in court, Price asked to omit certain names mentioned in it, explaining that those individuals lived in Northern Ireland and could face prosecution there if identified publicly. Detective-Officer Brady testified that when Kelly was arrested, two documents were found in his room. Kelly explained that one was a draft letter related to a play titled The Guests of the Nation. The presiding judge noted that the document was dated 1920 and ruled it irrelevant.

Detective-Officer Charles Ryan testified that he had been present during the questioning of Scott and Price. Scott had refused to answer inquiries about the IRA's constitution, its Army Council, the shootings of police officers and Mr. More O'Ferrall, and a document addressed by the IRA to striking Tramway Company workers. He also refused to account for his movements. When similarly questioned, Price, asked about the IRA's constitution, replied wryly, "It is a neat

document on sale for a penny." Asked where ammunition was kept, he remarked, "Yes, it seems to be kept in magazines and in good order, as seen on parades." He stated that on 23–24 March, he had gone out and returned home later that night before going to bed. Price also claimed that he had been interrogated after being held in a dark cell for 24 hours.[343]

In May 1935, '*An Phoblacht*' had documented that an "impressive" James Connolly commemoration was held under the auspices of the Dublin Trades Union Council. The Dublin Battalion of the Irish Citizen's Army led what was regarded as "a very large procession" from St. Stephen's Green to the GPO, where a meeting was held. Most of the speakers present appealed for support for the Irish Labour Party at the next election. However, Miss Helena Moloney dissented in reminding those present of Connolly's warning to the workers when he declared that to enter parliaments in the absence of certain conditions was akin to "the victim entering the gullet of the serpent."[344]

An opinion piece published in the '*Irish Workers' Voice*' under the headline "I.C.A. Men and Labour's New Move" commented on what it described as a renewed effort to revitalise the Labour Party in Ireland. As part of this initiative, the article reported that a group of Irish Citizen Army (I.C.A.) members, led by Dick McCormack and Michael Price, had joined the Labour Party en bloc. The piece noted that a special meeting of party members had been held in Dublin on a Tuesday evening, with William X. O'Brien presiding as chair. At this meeting, a motion proposed by Michael Price was carried, agreeing to launch a new campaign aimed at industrial and agricultural workers through public meetings and the distribution of leaflets. The article recorded strong criticism of Labour Party policy voiced during the meeting by a worker who stated that he had been a Labour supporter for thirty years. According to

[343] *Irish Independent 27/4/1935*

[344] *An Phoblacht 18/5/1935*

the report, he argued that the party ought to be ashamed of policies so indistinct that Fianna Fáil could appropriate them. He further contended that unemployment could only be resolved under socialism, and criticised the Labour Party for retreating from an explicit commitment to socialist principles. In its concluding analysis, the opinion piece interpreted the alignment of revolutionary socialist workers with the Labour Party in the Free State as evidence of an emerging militancy among the working masses. At the same time, it expressed scepticism about the prospects for transforming what it characterised as a reformist party into a revolutionary workers' party. It argued that such a transformation could not be achieved by confining activity within the structures of the pragmatically reformist and constitutional Labour Party alone, but required continued participation in broader workers' struggles beyond the party framework.[345]

The '*Irish Workers Voice*' reported in February 1936 that the authorities in the city of Belfast had acted against the revolutionary organisations active in the locale. The police had raided the homes of men believed to be members of the IRA and the Irish Citizens' Army (ICA). They were asked questions about matters pertaining to their activities, employment, and more. A careful "check-up" of various alleged members of other organisations was also underway. It was believed that this investigation had arisen "out of the war situation."[346]

An April 1936 article in the '*Irish Workers Voice*,' titled "Women Kicked and Beaten" and subtitled "Gang Attack on Easter Week Meeting," provided a first-hand account by a correspondent describing disturbances during the Easter Week commemorations in Dublin, Ireland. The piece reported that organised groups disrupted events attended by members of left-wing and republican organisations, including the old Communist Party of Ireland (CPI), the

[345] *Irish Workers' Voice 29/6/1935*

[346] *Irish Workers' Voice 22/2/1936*

Republican Congress, and others, during a parade and subsequent meeting. The incidents occurred on Sunday and Monday and involved themes of political conflict, limited police intervention, and hostility toward communist participants. The report called for a public inquiry and official action. The National Commemoration parade began on a Sunday afternoon from St Stephen's Green. It was led by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), followed by Cumann na mBan, Fianna Éireann, the Republican Soldiers' Federation, the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI), Clann na Gaedheal, Mná na Poblachta, the Republican Congress, and the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI). The CPI section was led by Seán Murray, as in previous years, and Captain Jack R. White, a founder of the Irish Citizen Army in 1913, also marched at the front.

According to the report, groups of men confronted CPI marchers at St Stephen's Green, attempting to remove Easter Lilies and red rosettes from their coats. The disturbances continued along the route, particularly on Westmoreland Street, where people running alongside the parade shouted abuse and struck participants. A larger confrontation occurred near Nelson's Pillar, where co-ordinated signals were allegedly used to begin the main attack. Further incidents were described at Doyle's Corner and Cross Guns Bridge, where participants were again assaulted. The report stated that members of the IRA intervened when attempts were made to seize a banner from Mná na Poblachta marchers. At the entrance to Glasnevin Cemetery, further disorder occurred. Groups entered the cemetery grounds and reportedly threw stones and railings. Several individuals, including Captain Jack White, George Gilmore, Miss Cora Ní h-Aodha, and Mrs E. McGregor, were injured. The article also noted that Roddy Connolly, son of James Connolly, was struck during the procession.

The disturbances continued into the following evening. A Labour–Republican meeting was planned for College Green to commemorate Easter Week, featuring speakers from the Communist Party, the Republican Congress, and trade unions, including Seán Murray, Jim Larkin Jr., Peadar

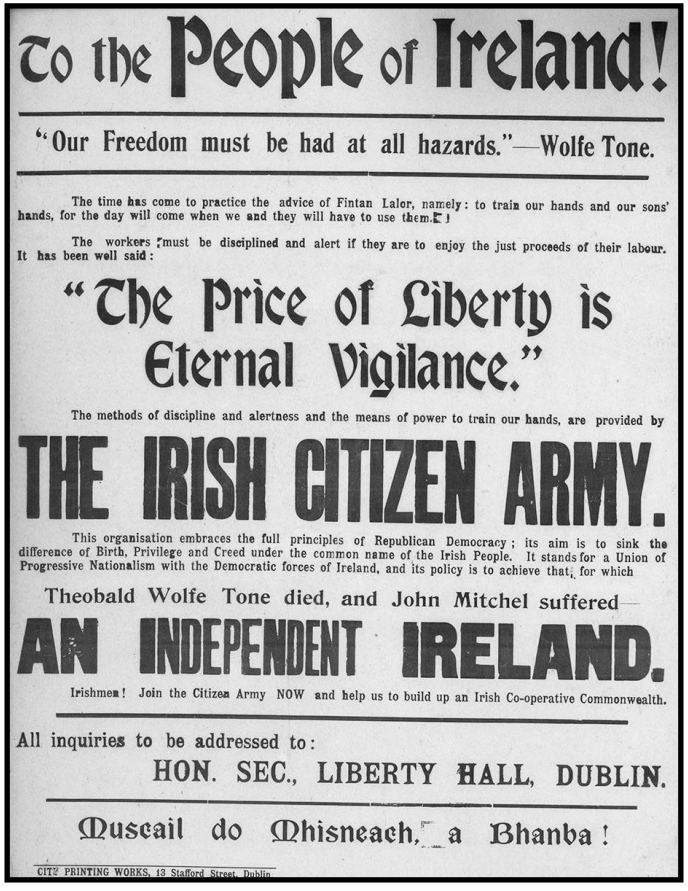
O'Donnell, R. J. Connolly, Jack Carney, Barney Conway, and Scottish MP William Gallacher. The report stated that opposition groups assembled to prevent the meeting, and that police did not disperse them. When Peadar O'Donnell began to speak, objects were thrown towards the platform, and some speakers, including Roddy Connolly and Jim Larkin Jr., were subjected to verbal abuse. The Civic Guards formed a cordon around the speakers and asked O'Donnell to end the meeting, offering them protection as they left. No arrests were made during either incident. Later that evening, several assaults on known members of the CPI and other republican organisations were reported. A young man was hospitalised after being attacked, and the offices of the Republican Congress were damaged. Attempts to damage the premises of the '*Workers' Voice*' and Unity Hall were reportedly prevented by police. The '*Irish Workers Voice*' article criticised the police response and the wider press coverage, alleging that other newspapers had either encouraged or failed to condemn the violence. It called for a public inquiry into the incidents and for those responsible to be held accountable.[347]

In December 1936, the '*Belfast Newsletter*' reported on significant developments within Irish republican circles during a period of political upheaval, primarily during the mid-1930s, amid the Spanish Civil War. It detailed the departure of eighty members of the Irish Republican Congress Party from Dublin City, who traveled to join the Communist forces of the Spanish Government. These volunteers were set to potentially oppose their fellow Irish countrymen serving in Mr. Eoin O'Duffy's Irish Brigade, which was fighting on the side of General Franco in Spain. This decision to dispatch a contingent to Spain had triggered a notable split amongst hardline Republicans. The Press Association was also cited as stating that, for the first time since 1913, the Dublin area was without a secret military force opposed to the Government. This assertion stemmed from the recent departure of the volunteer group and accompanying revelations about the Irish Republican Army

[347] *Irish Workers' Voice 18/4/1936*

(I.R.A.). Specifically, the article claimed that the I.R.A. had become "extinct" in Dublin City following the capture of Maurice Twomey, a prominent figure and former chief-of-staff. As a result, former I.R.A. members had become incorporated into the Irish Citizen Army. Further internal divisions were also highlighted through the actions of key individuals. Mr. George Gilmore, described as a colleague of Mr. Frank Ryan and one of the founders of the Republican Congress Party, had decided to withdraw from its leadership. He condemned the departure of IRA volunteers to fight alongside the Spanish Government. At the time of the report, Mr. Frank Ryan was present in Spain. Additionally, Michael Price, another founder of the Republican Congress, was noted as having led a large body of men from both the I.R.A. and the Republican Congress into the Irish Citizens' Army. This transition underscored the reorganisation and absorption of republican elements into alternative structures, during yet another period of internal turmoil in non-constitutional Republicanism.[348]

[348] *Belfast Newsletter 19/12/1936*



To the People of Ireland!

"Our Freedom must be had at all hazards."—Wolfe Tone.

The time has come to practice the advice of Fintan Lalor, namely: to train our hands and our sons' hands, for the day will come when we and they will have to use them.

The workers must be disciplined and alert if they are to enjoy the just proceeds of their labour. It has been well said:

"The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance."

The methods of discipline and alertness and the means of power to train our hands, are provided by

THE IRISH CITIZEN ARMY.

This organisation embraces the full principles of Republican Democracy; its aim is to sink the difference of Birth, Privilege and Creed under the common name of the Irish People. It stands for a Union of Progressive Nationalism with the Democratic forces of Ireland, and its policy is to achieve that; for which

Theobald Wolfe Tone died, and John Mitchel suffered—

AN INDEPENDENT IRELAND.

Irishmen! Join the Citizen Army NOW and help us to build up an Irish Co-operative Commonwealth.

All inquiries to be addressed to:

HON. SEC., LIBERTY HALL, DUBLIN.

Muscail do Mhisneach, a Bhanba!

CITY PRINTING WORKS, 13 Stafford Street, Dublin

The 'Belfast Newsletter' reported that much of the IRA membership in Dublin had folded into the revived ICA by December 1936.
(Photo source: Whyte's Auctioneers)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
REPUBLICANS AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM/FASCISM

A 1938 article titled 'Write Up the Gospel of Truth and Beauty,' from the radical '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' publication outlined an article in praise of national socialism, also sometimes known under the name of fascism. The writer, known as 'Lisheen,' quipped that it had often been said that Fascism had its roots in a national social philosophy, and that Nazism and Sovietism alike derived a portion of their driving force from such sources. Fascism, at any rate, was largely a movement of spirit - of national spirit. He claimed that Benito Mussolini had been a so-called 'resurrectionist,' and that he might have been as oblique as Niccolò Machiavelli, but it had been on antiquity, and not duplicity, that he had built his purist creed. In short, the writer claimed that Mussolini had cast a glamorous vision of ancient Rome upon a nation-wide screen, and the sight of it had supposedly stirred the people's pride. Fascism, Lisheen claimed, had been an example of the value of making nationality a living, vital thing. No nation, they claimed, could have hoped to rebuild the broken fortunes of its past, unless it had made nationality an essential part of daily life. To do so, it had been necessary to recall when, how, and by whom those fortunes had been broken, yet always without conscious falsehood.

Lisheen claimed that people, particularly publicists, ought not to have ignored realities. If Co. Cork had been titled as a republic, and Dublin a subservient colony, then it would have been a falsehood to claim that Ireland was free. Yet such falsehoods had been brazenly spoken by the demigods of the day. At their mother's knee, people had been taught that no motive could excuse a lie, and that God punished the liar. Was a lie exempt from divine law merely because it had been elevated to the realm of politics or philosophy? Of course not. To say so would have been heresy. And what had all this to do with writing? The writer had to be reminded of the danger of false assumptions, and encouraged to keep close to God, to truth, and to country.

Lisheen opined that before revealing the secret of how one might have become a successful writer, it had been useful to offer a few light hints on the art.

"What shall I write about?" many had asked. The reply had been simple: what had Virgil, Homer, Shakespeare, Davis, Mangan, La Fontaine, or O'Cearnaigh written about? Lisheen remarked that one might have protested, "I am no Shakespeare or Davis, but, like Mark Antony, only a plain, blunt man." Very well, then one could have written about "all common things-each day's events-that began and ended with the hour."

The transitions of life, he claimed, inevitably shaped thought. In youth, poetry had dominated. Between youth and middle age, a variety of emotions impressed themselves. After that, men and women often turned to writing about politics, marriage, or both. The public had always been interested in how a man supported his wife and raised his children in the love of God-even on the dole. It had been ten times more interested to hear how he managed to keep house on a thousand pounds a year. Every aspect of married life yielded topics for writing. "Sharing the Lodger's Rasher" or "How to Milk Both Cow and Customer" might well have served as suggestive titles.

Lisheen claimed that "ah," some had said, "politics is a subject of perennial interest." Yet "pecuniary" might have been the more accurate word, in his opinion. Political life was beset with pitfalls and crowded with place-hunters. He believed that there had been little freshness in it for a writer. Nevertheless, one could always begin to practise the art of writing. It was unlikely to bring either monetary or moral reward. But if one had been bitten by the writing bug, it was still all to the good. He stressed that the gospel of national independence needed to be preached and expounded. It was a noble and holy gospel, embracing God, truth, and beauty. It enriched and exalted. It had been the true inspiration of the soldier, who should never have fought for anything less than

a cause he already held high in his heart. Far from being narrow, this gospel was as wide as God's love.

Lisheen opined that in the struggle for one's national independence, many things had to be noted and recorded. Spiritual and traditional considerations required due recognition: reverence for the past, for the martyr, and for the master mind. He suggested that there had been a wide diversity of influences implicit in the national struggle, such as hill and dale, ravine and river, cairn and cromlech, tree, flower, bird, and sky. All awaited new forms of literary expression. It was claimed that they were features of Ireland, and of Ireland alone - not Saxon, nor Italian. To write about them, he suggested, was to sow the seeds of true nationality. Wolfe Tone, he remarked, had discovered a gold mine. Was it not in danger of being closed simply because writers would not write about its riches?

Surely, Lisheen had hoped in the piece, the passion for liberty had not, in his view, died out in Ireland. Certainly, they claimed, it had needed revival-in prose and in poetry. The young men and women of Ireland ought not to have allowed themselves to be shamed by their intellectual indolence. They should have liberated their faculties in the interest of their country, and helped to bring the gold of truth, beauty, and uncontaminated patriotism into the hearts of the people. In his opinion, that would have been the simple but dignified way to erect a composite memorial to the memory of every Irish separatist who had emancipated imprisoned thought. In that way, it was claimed, lay their duty.[349]

A January 1939 '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*' article presents a radical republican and anti-capitalist critique of Éire's political economy, portraying the daily press, the government, and the banking system as instruments of a financial "plutocracy" operating in the interests of the British Empire. It argues that newspapers no longer served the public but instead functioned as vehicles for propaganda that masked and legitimised the alleged ongoing erosion of Irish economic

[349] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 9/7/1938*

independence. According to the article, the central struggle of the time is not between political parties, but between the Irish people and a financial elite whose objective is to eliminate what little freedom remains after limited independence.

At the centre of the article is a fierce attack on Seán Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce, who is depicted as a servant of the Bank of England, rather than a representative of Irish national interests. The author (known as "Uisneach") focuses on a lecture Lemass gave to the Engineers' Association in which he asserted that Ireland's future industrial development must depend on power generated from peat. This claim is presented not as a genuine technical proposal but as a political directive whose purpose was to halt industrial expansion. The article mocks the idea that a politician with a background in retail trade should dictate technical energy policy to engineers, arguing that the decision had already been taken elsewhere and merely announced through Lemass.

The article contends that the peat-power policy originated in London as part of an economic settlement between Eamon de Valera and the British government. According to this interpretation, Britain agreed to accept Irish food exports only on the condition that Ireland would restrict its own industrial development, thereby preventing competition with British manufacturing. Since Great Britain would not pay for Irish food in gold, it would instead pay in industrial goods, making it necessary for Ireland to curtail domestic industry. Lemass's peat ultimatum is thus portrayed as a mechanism for sabotaging Irish industrialisation by imposing an unrealistically expensive and impractical energy requirement. The author argues that Lemass's demand that engineers make peat-based power cheaper than all other sources within two years was deliberately impossible to fulfil. This, in turn, would justify abandoning industrial expansion altogether. The government's role, in this view, is not to solve technical problems but to provide political cover for decisions already taken in the interests of British finance. The support of Lemass's position by the '*Irish Press*' is cited as evidence that the mainstream media cooperates in this process by

shaping public opinion to accept policies that will lead to industrial collapse.

According to the article, the banking system would then enforce this collapse by calling in loans, restricting credit, and driving firms into bankruptcy. Irish banks are portrayed as subordinate agents of the Bank of England, prepared to sacrifice Irish industry to preserve the wider financial order. The peat-power policy is therefore characterised as the "swan song" of Fianna Fáil's industrial programme, marking the end of any serious attempt at national economic development.

In contrast, the article argues that Ireland had many viable alternatives that were ignored because they would have benefited small producers rather than banks and large corporations. It points to the potential of local water-powered mills, which could have supported decentralised industry at lower cost than the centralised Electricity Supply Board. It also notes appeals from local figures such as Father Conefrey in County Leitrim to use existing corn mills for the wheat-milling scheme, but claims these were dismissed because small farmers and local enterprises lacked financial influence. The article extends this argument to other sectors. State-sponsored alcohol factories, sugar factories, and large industrial schemes are described as wasteful "white elephants" that primarily serve financial interests. Small-scale producers, such as traditional poteen makers and local dye manufacturers in western Ireland, are said to be capable of supplying goods more cheaply and effectively, but are excluded because they do not provide profitable opportunities for banks to lend money and charge interest. The same logic, it is argued, explains the failure to invest in fishing harbours and boats, even though these would have supported rural livelihoods.

Finally, the article presents mass emigration as both a consequence and a deliberate tool of this economic system. It claims that approximately twenty thousand people leave Ireland each year because domestic industry and employment are being systematically undermined. This is portrayed as a

loss of enormous "capital value" to the nation and as part of a broader strategy to depopulate Ireland, leaving behind a reduced population of herdsmen and agricultural labourers serving large ranches. In its concluding rhetoric, the article accuses Lemass, de Valera, and their colleagues of betraying the nation for the benefit of financial elites, asserting that while these leaders may receive pensions and respectability, their legacy will be one of economic and national ruin.[350]

During April 1939, and writing in the '*Wolfe Tone Weekly*,' "Uisneach" drew attention to a recent speech by Adolf Hitler in the German Parliament (Reichstag), in which the German leader declared his intention to transform the State Bank into a "note institution" of the Nazi German State, rather than leave it under the influence of international finance. According to Uisneach, this declaration had been swiftly acted upon: the German State Bank was taken over by the government, its senior officials dismissed, and a new administration installed. Dr Hjalmar Schacht, the former head of the Bank, was said to have gone "on a prolonged holiday." Uisneach asserted that this move meant German currency would now be issued in proportion to the nation's actual productive capacity. In his view, this ridiculed the orthodox notion that money derived its validity from gold or foreign exchange locked away in vaults. Instead, the paper argued, money would be backed by tangible goods and services - the real wealth of the nation. This shift, he claimed, made Germany financially stronger, since the government could now issue money interest-free, without paying "usury" to itself or to bankers. Uisneach went further, insisting that local authorities too could and should be financed interest-free, with newly created money carrying no charge.

For Uisneach, this amounted to Nazi Germany throwing off the "shackles of international finance" and asserting the principle that the true capital of a nation was not its money but its productive power. Other countries, he suggested, would either be forced to follow Germany in ousting financial plutocracy, or else try to destroy her by war and

[350] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 7/1/1939*

reimpose “orthodox” systems. He described the move as revolutionary, noting that the English press either suppressed Hitler’s statement or quoted it without comment. Financial circles in London and Wall Street, he alleged, were “furious,” while official rhetoric about “freedom” and “small nations” was, in his view, nothing more than a hypocritical mask for the outrage of international finance.

Uisneach concluded by turning to Ireland. He contended that England, crippled by a corrupt financial system that had left half its people destitute, was being overtaken by Nazi Germany, which had reorganised itself around work and productivity. By contrast, Irish politicians in 1927 had, he argued, betrayed the nation by binding it into the same “rotten system.” For seventeen years, he claimed, the Irish people had endured “schoolboy government.” It was, he insisted, high time to restore the Republic and bring life back to the people.[351]

In May 1939, an article from the ‘*Irish Workers Weekly*’ reported on a recent issue of the ‘*Republican Review*,’ which it described as a very peculiar Irish Republican journal focused on international problems, and had allegedly launched a fierce attack on President Roosevelt while expressing approval for Hitler and Mussolini. It urged them to guarantee the national independence of some seventeen states for the next ten years. The ‘*Republican Review*’ was furious with Roosevelt for linking America's destinies to Western "democracies," accusing him of initially holding good intentions for social justice, but subsequently abandoning traditional U.S. isolation and neutrality to pursue this policy. The piece portrayed the ‘*Republican Review*’ as advocating for U.S. isolation and neutrality in the struggle against fascism in Europe, a stance deemed peculiar for Irish Republicanism. It noted that this departed entirely from traditional Irish Republican policy, which had always been part of Irish nationalist opinion to share in all shades of isolationism and enlist U.S.A. support for just causes in Europe, particularly in the long struggle against British

[351] *Wolfe Tone Weekly 12/4/1939*

Imperialism. The article highlighted how this section of Irish Republicanism added its "voice to that of the American die-hards to keep the American people 'neutral,' while the independence of every nation, from China and Abyssinia to Czechoslovakia and Poland, is being destroyed by Fascists." It criticised the review for abandoning the poor and forgotten men of America and going anew to the international money lords of Wall Street and London, who had become the bitter and prejudiced opposition of Germany and Italy.

The '*Irish Workers Weekly*' suggested this would come as a surprise to Americans and Irish-Americans to learn that Roosevelt was the tool of the bankers, despite the working class of the U.S.A. having hitherto supported the Roosevelt administration in the battle against the bankers and the great monopolies. It questioned whether the Trusts and Bankers through their agency, the Supreme Court, sabotaged the "New Deal," and if this was a notorious fact, that in spite of the Roosevelt administration, did carry through very useful measures in the interests of the jobless and the average American. The article also thanked the victory of Mr. Roosevelt's nominee for Governor of California that Tom Mooney was rescued from the dungeon of San Quentin after twenty-three years. However, the '*Republican Review*' claimed that Roosevelt was an enemy of the American workers, an agent of the Bankers and a war-monger, and throws its lot in with the "isolationists and the friends of Fascism in America." The paper was supposedly raging because Roosevelt had "become the bitter and prejudiced opponent of Germany and Italy." Apparently, the '*Irish Workers Weekly*' quipped. nothing would suit the '*Review*' better than for Roosevelt to sing hymns in praise of Hitler and Mussolini. It let this Republican journal speak further for itself: "The insult to Germany and Italy implied in this cheap jack, cute, peace invitation, shows the trend of Roosevelt." The article continued its critique of Roosevelt's policy, which had been so evident since the failure of his "New Deal," and argued that the President wished to direct the affairs and the preparation for foreign wars. This entire issue of the '*Republican Review*,' it was claimed, was simply a glorification of German and Italian Fascism, and an attack on

the Popular Front movements that were battling against this worst of all Imperialisms. The '*Review*' allegedly gloated over Mussolini's invasion and annexation of Albania, asserting that Mussolini was not the villain of the piece here. No, they humorously mocked, it was "King Zog!" Zog was a political adventurer who was willing to sell himself to the highest bidder. The article advocated for Irish freedom from such a power and advocated that he be hanged. Mussolini's brutes, however, were somehow gentlemen, who through blindness or wilful folly, if they had their way, would align Ireland with a villainous and murderous Fascism, against the entire Labour and democratic, and national independence movements of the world, with British Imperialism as an ally. The '*Irish Workers Weekly*' urged Irishmen, both at home and in the U.S.A., to resolutely oppose any such tactics, described as "suicidal"; and to join in with the Labour and Popular movements in opposition to Fascism and its allegedly imperialist war into the arms of powerful British Imperialism. Such a policy, they claimed, would lead to the freedom of their own country.[352]

A 2011 feature in '*The Times*' asserts that the IRA's collaboration with Nazi Germany is a veiled aspect of the republican struggle. The paper notes that, despite adopting leftist principles, the IRA's primary ally throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s was Hitler's Nazi state. In 1938, Jim O'Donovan, an engineer, was solicited by Seán Russell, chief-of-staff of the IRA, to rejoin the organisation. O'Donovan subsequently devised the IRA's 'S-plan,' a bombing initiative in England that culminated in the deaths of five civilians in Coventry in 1939. The devastation attracted the Nazis' attention, prompting O'Donovan to go to Europe four times before World War II to establish connections with German military intelligence. The IRA solicited weapons and funds from the Nazis, however there is no evidence that it received a substantial amount of either. It also formulated 'Plan Kathleen,' which anticipated a collaborative Nazi-IRA incursion into Northern Ireland. The

[352] *Irish Workers' Weekly 13/5/1939*

Nazi Germans rejected the concept, considering it ill-conceived.[353]

In World War II, known as "the Emergency" in neutral Éire, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) aimed to use the war to terminate the partition of Ireland and attain union. It was in 1938 when Seán Russell launched the S-Plan. The sabotage initiative including approximately 300 explosions across Britain from January 1939 to May 1940, resulting in the deaths of 10 people and injuries to 96, (including the aforementioned fatal explosion in Coventry). This intended to coerce Great Britain, but resulted in counter-productive outcomes, including crackdowns, arrests, and killings of IRA members. In September 1939, when Britain engaged in conflict with Germany, the IRA viewed the Nazis as possible collaborators for a unified Ireland. In May 1940, Sean Russell travelled to Berlin to seek assistance, but perished while returning on a German submarine. Under acting head Stephen Hayes, the IRA formulated ‘Plan Kathleen; in April 1940, which had advocated for a German amphibious invasion of Northern Ireland at Derry/Londonderry, bolstered by an IRA assault from County Leitrim, targeting an RAF facility at Lough Erne. The proposal, formulated by IRA member Liam Gaynor and presented to German intelligence (Abwehr) by businessman Stephen Held, depended on German weaponry shipments via submarines, but was considered unfeasible owing to the IRA's insufficient finances and logistical capabilities.

In May 1940, the Gardaí conducted a search on Held's residence, confiscating papers that revealed the conspiracy, which were then shared with British MI5. This resulted in clandestine collaboration between Ireland and Britain, including Plan W - a contingency for British troops to invade Ireland in the event of a German invasion, which included soldier deployments, aerial assistance, and naval blockades. German espionage agent Hermann Görtz parachuted into Ireland, evaluated the idea, and deemed it impractical. Ultimately, no invasion transpired, since Nazi objectives

[353] *Paul, M (2011). ‘The IRA’s Nazi Little Secret.’ The Times.*

were predicated on the conquest of Britain first, which proved unsuccessful. The event had exposed the IRA's desperation during partition tensions, Nazi indifference towards civilian-targeted actions, and Ireland's susceptibility, leading to a military expansion to 40,000 personnel and the procurement of British weapons. It also emphasised the ironic coalitions between historical adversaries Ireland (the State) and Britain in response to a shared Nazi threat, illustrating the complexity of neutrality throughout WWII.[354]

It has been noted that the military intelligence of the State (GQ) had suspected that Jim (Seamus) O'Donovan attempted to indoctrinate the IRA with Nazi thinking, but had little success due to the leaders' perspectives, which were not conducive to the embrace of Nazi theories.[355]

Professor Brian Hanley notes that the relationship between the Nazis and the IRA is enveloped in dispute. Russell visited Russia in search of arms, yet he was not a communist; there is no evidence to indicate that he was ideologically aligned with Nazism either. Nonetheless, several prominent IRA leaders in Dublin had pro-fascist inclinations. In August 1940, Russell was reunited with Frank Ryan and sent on a U-boat bound for Ireland. He fell quite unwell on board and succumbed to a perforated ulcer on 14 August 1940. He was buried at sea.[356]

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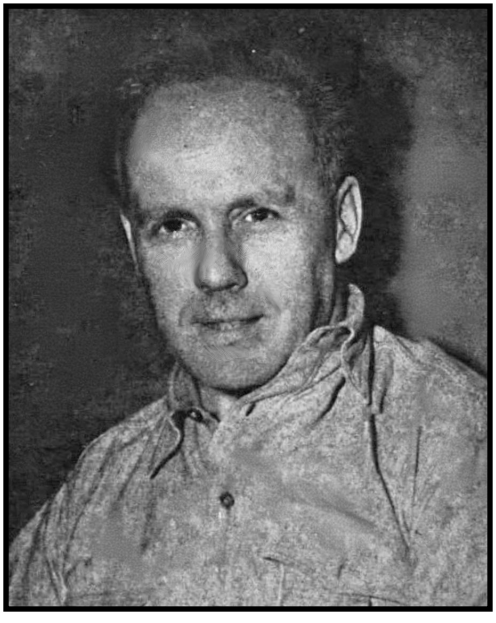
[354] *Roblin, S (2019). 'Plan Kathleen: The IRA's Plot to Help the Hitler Invade Ireland.' The National Interest.*

[355] *O'Donoghue, D (2010). 'Devil's Deal: The IRA, Nazi Germany and the Double-life of Jim O'Donovan.' New Island.*

[356] *Hanley, B (2009). 'Seán Russell.' Dictionary of Irish Biography.*

Jim (Seamus) O'Donovan's attempts to infuse Nazi ideology into the IRA were rebuffed by the organisation's leadership. (Source: 'Devil's Deal' [2010]. New Island Books)



Seán Russell, as IRA 'chief-of-staff,' sought to procure resources and logistical support from the Nazi Military at the onset of World War II. He died from a perforated ulcer onboard a Nazi U-Boat in August 1940.
(Photo source: 'An Phoblacht')

CONCLUSION

Writing under the heading 'Restore the Means of Production to the People,' Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, former chief of the IRA Army Council, emphasised that the central aim of the Irish Republican movement had always been the restoration of the nation's wealth - both land and industry - to the Irish people. In his view, the struggle for national liberation was inseparable from the struggle for social and economic justice. True freedom, he argued, required returning control of production, distribution, and trade to the Irish people, thereby creating a more equitable system in which the nation's wealth benefited all citizens, rather than a privileged few. Ó Brádaigh echoed James Connolly in asserting that simply removing British Imperial parliamentary control would have been insufficient; without an economic transformation, power would have remained in the hands of capitalists, landlords, and entrenched commercial institutions. Ó Brádaigh also highlighted the economic disparities in Northern Ireland, describing it as an economically depressed appendage of the English Crown's capitalist system. At the time, he noted that unemployment in the Six Counties consistently ran around 8% of the insured workforce, far above the roughly 2% rate in Great Britain, illustrating the structural inequalities that persisted decades after partition. In a separate piece, Ó Brádaigh outlined the Republican movement's approach to social and economic issues, responding to various criticisms that it promoted "extreme Socialism." He described a vision that included the nationalisation of the monetary system, commercial banks, and insurance companies, along with key industries, mines, building land, and fishing rights. Large ranches were to be divided, and an upper limit imposed on the amount of land any one individual could own. The plan also envisaged the widespread establishment of worker-owned co-operatives in industry, agriculture, fishing, and distribution, while still allowing scope for private enterprise under state supervision. Additionally, the development and expansion of credit unions formed an integral part of this economic programme. Ó Brádaigh was critical of organisations such as the Communist Party of Northern

Ireland, the Irish Workers' Party and the Connolly Youth Movement (CYM), believing that they aspired to "dictatorship." Ó Brádaigh also referred to these groups knocking RTÉ cameras and assaulting others, "showing they would deny free speech to anyone who disagreed with them." Instead, he remarked that:

> *"Ours is a Socialism based on the native Irish tradition of Comhar na gComharsan, which is founded on the right of worker-ownership and on our Irish and Christian values."*[357]

In '*Free Ireland: Towards a Lasting Peace*,' Gerry Adams (President of Provisional Sinn Féin) asserted that James Connolly's warnings about the limits of political independence were tragically evident throughout the Twenty-six Counties. In 1897, Connolly had written:

> *"If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of a Socialist Republic your efforts will have been in vain. England will still rule you. She would rule you through the whole array of commercial and individual institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs. England would still rule you, even while your lips offered hypocritical homage at the shrine of that freedom whose cause you have betrayed."*

Adams noted that ordinary people across Ireland had come to experience the reality of their powerlessness under British influence, whether in its colonial or neo-colonial form. The country's resources lay largely beyond their control, and key economic and social decision-making remained in the hands of foreign owners and multinational corporations. Workers often found themselves unable to confront the true decision-makers during industrial disputes, with governments and other authorities intervening to caution against actions that

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[357] *Ó Brádaigh, Ruairí (2014). 'Selected Writings & Speeches.' Cló Saoirse.*

might threaten jobs or Ireland's investment reputation. Multinational companies frequently benefited from the labour and resources of Irish citizens while expatriating the resulting profits abroad. The Dublin government relied heavily on foreign and multinational capital, and on the EU, despite evidence that this dependence had failed to produce sustainable growth. This economic strategy, Adams argued, had led to rising unemployment, poverty, emigration, increased borrowing, and declining living standards. Although successive governments claimed to uphold the ideals of the 1916 Proclamation, economic control remained concentrated in the hands of a small elite, rather than with the Irish people. Adams also highlighted the human cost of this system. While the Proclamation promised to cherish all the children of the nation equally, persistent emigration revealed that many children were unable to remain in Ireland, let alone be equally supported.[358]

These enduring critiques from figures like Ó Brádaigh and Adams outline how the social aspirations articulated in the 1916 Proclamation and pursued by the early IRA remained unachieved, with partition and neo-colonial economics perpetuating inequality long after the revolutionary period. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, the IRA's non-constitutional wing actively sought to translate these ideals into action, blending anti-imperialist fervour with explicit anti-capitalist policies that challenged both British dominance and domestic elites. Initiatives such as Saor Éire, though short-lived, exemplified this commitment to overthrowing capitalism through worker-farmer alliances, even as ecclesiastical and governmental backlash forced the movement to adapt its strategies without abandoning its core revolutionary ethos.

Though the Army Council-backed Saor Éire political platform (which called for the overthrow of capitalism) would fold after being assailed by churchmen and the

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[358] *Adams, Gerry (1994). 'Free Ireland: Towards a Lasting Peace.' Roberts Rinehart Pub.*

government, it did not signal the end of attempts to rejuvenate the IRA.[359]

The dissolution of Saor Éire under intense pressure from church and state did not extinguish the IRA's radical flame but instead compelled it to evolve, embedding its anti-capitalist principles more deeply within a multifaceted ideological framework that persisted through the 1930s and beyond. This adaptability allowed the movement to draw from diverse non-capitalist traditions - ranging from Catholic-inspired Distributism to more Marxist influences - while maintaining a unified opposition to imperialism and exploitation. In this way, the IRA's members navigated excommunication and societal ostracism by framing their social agenda as both a moral imperative and a revolutionary necessity, echoing global movements where faith and social justice intersected in the fight against oppression.

The hardline IRA of the 1920s-1940s, operating outside constitutional politics, encompassed a blatant anti-capitalist and revolutionary anti-imperialist ethos, with members drawing on a range of non-capitalist economic ideas, from Distributism to more explicitly Soviet Communist-inspired proposals. Within this spectrum, some figures (despite excommunication from the Catholic Church) combined Christian morality with social critique, framing measures such as land redistribution, workers' rights, and public control of resources as consistent with their religious convictions. These Christian-influenced, non-constitutional republicans represented a more moderate current within an otherwise hardline movement, in which secular revolutionary and Marxist-inspired ideas were also influential. The interplay of religious belief and left-wing revolutionary politics within the IRA during this period bears some similarity to later 'liberation-theology' movements, such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua or Palestinian Christian activists, in that faith could be invoked as a moral rationale for opposing oppression, advocating social justice and the

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[359] *Mommsen, Wolfgang (1982). 'Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Europe.' St. Martin's Press.*

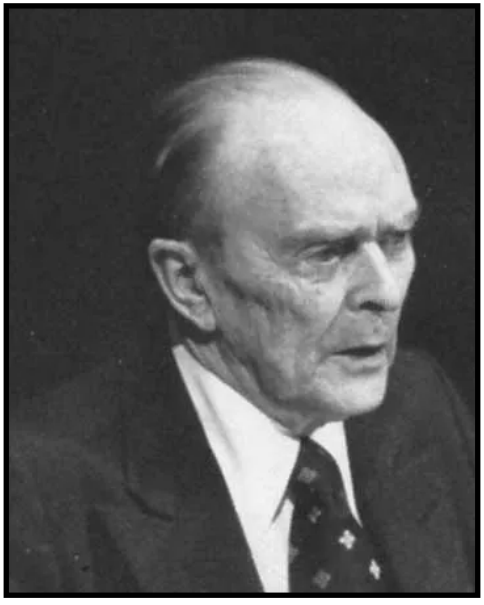
abolition of existing institutional structures. The IRA, for the most part, also displayed a clear opposition to fascist and corporatist movements, most notably in its notorious clashes with the Blueshirts during the 1930s. At the same time, the movement's ideological diversity within the non-capitalist domain demonstrates that religious commitment was only one strand within a broader, radical challenge to existing social, economic, and political structures.

This fusion of religious conviction and radical politics within the IRA not only distinguished it from purely atheistic communist models, but also positioned it as a precursor to later liberation theologies, where ethical imperatives drove demands for systemic change. However, the movement's opposition to fascism - manifest in confrontations with the Blueshirts - further illustrated its commitment to egalitarian principles over authoritarian alternatives, even amid internal debates. Reflecting on this period from a modern perspective reveals the extent to which the political landscape of 1920s-1930s Ireland was steeped in transformative ideas, with even ostensibly moderate groups like early Fianna Fáil emerging from a populist, anti-establishment milieu that shared roots with the IRA's more uncompromising stance.

Viewed through a contemporary lens, it is easy to underestimate how radical Irish politics had been in the 1920s and 1930s. Parties and movements that today appear moderate or conservative often had origins that were far more left-populist and anti-establishment than their present-day incarnations suggest. For example, Fianna Fáil, now widely associated with mainstream, globalised capitalist politics, and primarily responsible for introducing various multi-national corporations into the economy, was founded in the late 1920s as a more constitutional and pragmatic entity than other Anti-Treaty groups, but it nevertheless lobbied for policies aimed at land redistribution, economic intervention, and substantial State support for impoverished rural and working-class communities. Its early platform emphasised populist economic measures and a challenge to entrenched interests, reflecting a broader climate in which both constitutional and revolutionary politics were suffused with

anti-imperialist, capitalist-sceptic, and socially progressive currents (though, it would change on most of these topics within a few years of administration). In this context, what appears moderate today was, at the time, part of a spectrum of radical political experimentation in Ireland. Given that the anti-Treaty IRA was more radical in both economic and social terms than even early Fianna Fáil, it highlights that the movement was anything but conservative in the sense of defending established social or economic hierarchies. Its strongly anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and revolutionary programme placed it clearly outside the bounds of mainstream or establishment politics, even as it drew on religious and ethical frameworks in parts of its membership.

Ultimately, the social agenda of Irish Republicanism from 1916 to 1940 - marked by fervent anti-capitalism, calls for land and resource redistribution, workers' control and a blend of revolutionary socialism with indigenous and religious traditions - stands as a testament to a movement that sought not just national 'liberation' in the sense of a separate parliament or administrative structure, but a profound reconfiguration of power and wealth in service of the Irish people. By excavating these often airbrushed elements through primary sources and historical accounts, this study resolves the common-place cognitive dissonance between oft-popular romanticisations of Irish republicanism as a straightforward administrative battle, and its gritty reality as an often class-conscious, anti-imperialist force. In an era where economic inequalities and neo-colonial influences persist, revisiting this radical heritage offers valuable insights into Ireland's unfinished revolution, reminding us that true republican sovereignty demands both administrative independence and social justice, lest the sacrifices of the past yield only superficial change.



Sean MacBride, a barrister and former IRA chief-of-staff, once remarked that he was "prepared to go the whole hog for the Workers' Republic."
(Photo source: Encyclopaedia Britannica)

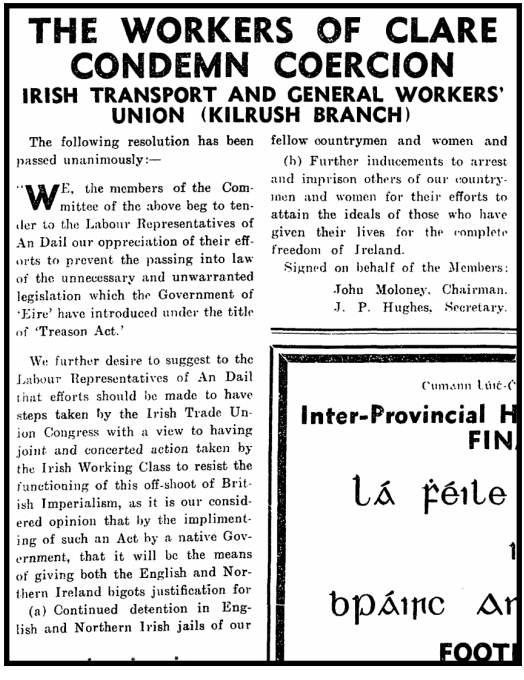
I.R.A. SUPPORT RENT REDUCTIONS

Big Co. Longford Meeting

REPRESENTATIVES of the I.R.A. spoke at a large meeting of Edgeworthstown Town Tenants, on the 2nd inst., in support of the Tenants' demand for a 50 per cent. reduction in their rents.

(Photo source: Republican Congress 15/12/1934)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



THE WORKERS OF CLARE CONDEMN COERCION

IRISH TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION (KILRUSH BRANCH)

The following resolution has been passed unanimously:—

"WE, the members of the Committee of the above beg to tender to the Labour Representatives of An Dail our oppreciation of their efforts to prevent the passing into law of the unnecessary and unwarranted legislation which the Government of 'Eire' have introduced under the title of 'Treason Act.'

We further desire to suggest to the Labour Representatives of An Dail that efforts should be made to have steps taken by the Irish Trade Union Congress with a view to having joint and concerted action taken by the Irish Working Class to resist the functioning of this off-shoot of British Imperialism, as it is our considered opinion that by the implimenting of such an Act by a native Government, that it will be the means of giving both the English and Northern Ireland bigots justification for

(a) Continued detention in English and Northern Irish jails of our fellow countrymen and women and

(b) Further inducements to arrest and imprison others of our countrymen and women for their efforts to attain the ideals of those who have given their lives for the complete freedom of Ireland.

Signed on behalf of the Members:

John Moloney, Chairman.
J. P. Hughes, Secretary.

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The Kilrush, Co. Clare branch of the IT&GWU publicly criticises the 'Coercion Act' passed that year.
(Source: Republican Review 8/3/1939)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?
POEM - '*THE DEFIANT DAWN*'

By Tadgh Quill-Manley/Ó Cuill-Maonlaí

Destiny is carved by courage
The edge of despair is where heroes are born
Our hearts burn with unyielding conviction
Against the tyrant's hand, our vow is sworn

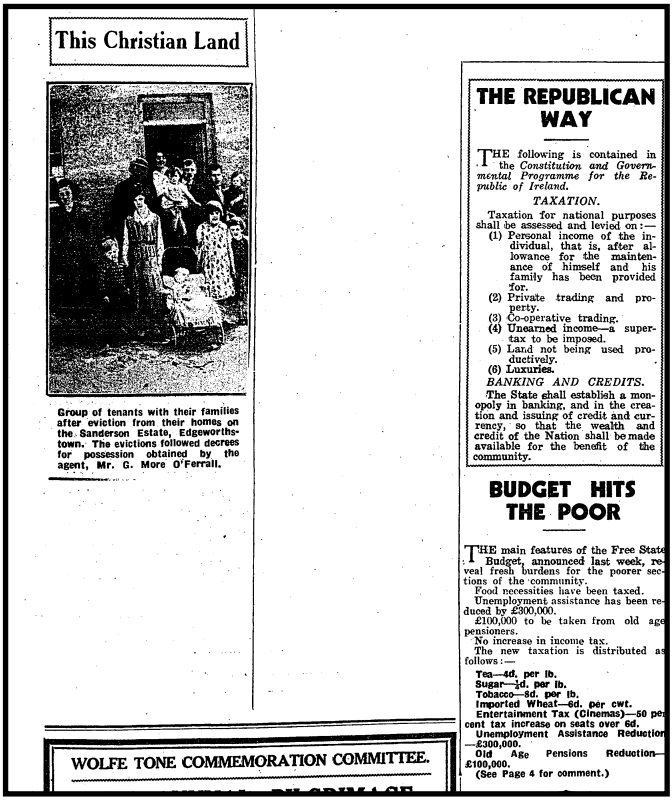
Our struggle is the measure of glory
Comprising the core of the story
The movement which won't be tamed
And a spirit that cannot be chained

In the darkest hour, we shan't shed a tear
Or give up on our cause, most dear
Jotting down an important note in one's journal
Suffering is temporary; defiance eternal

We must make sense of the strife
Exploring every sphere of life
Going far beyond the chamber
To achieve real democratic control
And an economic vision to make it whole
Revolt is the poetry of the soul

Prof. Brian Hanley noted in 'The IRA, 1926-1936' that Tom Barry had remarked in 1934 that he did not fight in the famed Crossbarry ambush so that Irish workers would be exploited by their employers.
(Photo source: Southern Star)

JUST ANOTHER FLAG?



This Christian Land

Group of tenants with their families after eviction from their homes on the Sanderson Estate, Edgeworthstown. The evictions followed decrees for possession obtained by the agent, Mr. G. More O'Ferrall.

THE REPUBLICAN WAY

THE following is contained in the *Constitution and Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland.*

TAXATION.

Taxation for national purposes shall be assessed and levied on:—

(1) Personal income of the individual, that is, after allowance for the maintenance of himself and his family has been provided for.
(2) Private trading and property.
(3) Co-operative trading.
(4) Unearned income—a supertax to be imposed.
(5) Land not being used productively.
(6) Luxuries.

BANKING AND CREDITS.

The State shall establish a monopoly in banking, and in the creation and issuing of credit and currency, so that the wealth and credit of the Nation shall be made available for the benefit of the community.

BUDGET HITS THE POOR

THE main features of the Free State Budget, announced last week, reveal fresh burdens for the poorer sections of the community.

Food necessities have been taxed.

Unemployment assistance has been reduced by £300,000.

£100,000 to be taken from old age pensioners.

No increase in income tax.

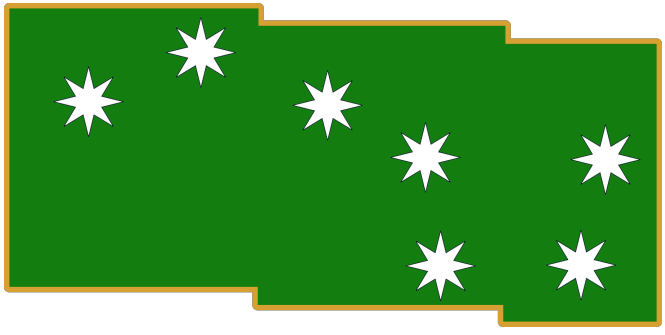
The new taxation is distributed as follows:—

Tea—4d. per lb.
Sugar—1d. per lb.
Tobacco—8d. per lb.
Imported Wheat—6d. per cwt.
Entertainment Tax (Cinemas)—50 per cent tax increase on seats over 6d.
Unemployment Assistance Reduction—£300,000.
Old Age Pensions Reduction—£100,000.

(See Page 4 for comment.)

WOLFE TONE COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE.

This front page of an edition of 'An Phoblacht' shows a photograph of an eviction of tenants, under the sarcastic heading 'This Christian Land.' Adjacent to it is a section titled 'The Republican Way,' promoting progressive taxation on "luxuries," land not being used productively, private property and trading, and co-operative trading. It also calls for a State monopoly on banking and credit to be established. Below it, another piece characterises a recent Govt. budget as an attack on the poor.
(Photo source: An Phoblacht 25/5/1935)



Just another flat?